

KIRKMAN • OTTLEY • CRABTREE

# INVINCIBLE™



VOLUME FIVE

## THE FACTS OF LIFE

Introduction by Mike Wieringo

**image**<sup>®</sup> COMICS PRESENTS

# INVINCIBLE<sup>™</sup>

## THE FACTS OF LIFE



CREATED BY  
**ROBERT KIRKMAN  
& CORY WALKER**

**image**<sup>®</sup>





YES  
SIR.

writer  
**ROBERT  
KIRKMAN**

penciler, inker  
**RYAN  
OTTLEY**

colorist  
**BILL  
CRABTREE**

letterer  
**RUS  
WOOTON**

cover  
**RYAN OTTLEY  
& BILL CRABTREE**

## ORIGIN STORIES

**MONSTER GIRL**  
penciler, inker  
**TODD NAUCK**  
colorist  
**BILL CRABTREE**

**ATOM EVE**  
penciler, inker  
**KHARY RANDOLPH**  
colorist  
**KANNILA TRIPP**

**IMMORTAL**  
penciler, inker  
**CORY WALKER**  
colorist  
**BILL CRABTREE**

**REX SPODE**  
penciler, inker  
**MATHEW ROBERTS**  
colorist  
**BILL CRABTREE**

**DUPLI-KATE**  
artist  
**JOSHUA LUNA**



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**INVINCIBLE, VOL. 5: THE FACTS OF LIFE**

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# INTRODUCTION

Robert Kirkman is a very lucky guy.

Y'see, not every one is born with the kind of imagination and ability to craft the sheer volume of stories that Robert does. It's like his mind is a warehouse packed to the rafters with colorful, well-rounded and fascinating characters that he's able to weave complex and engaging stories for and around. If you're ANY kind of comic book fan, you're bound to have heard of at least ONE of Robert's myriad creator-owned projects--books like the red-hot popular WALKING DEAD, CAPES, TECH JACKET, BRIT... and my absolute favorite of ALL of them, the one you're holding in your hands now, INVINCIBLE. Like most folks my age, I grew up reading superhero comics--and I still love them, deep down. But as the years-- the decades-- have slid by, these 40-plus year old characters have lost a little of their luster. After all, when a character is a corporate icon (as all Marvel and DC characters are, let's face it)-- they're not allowed to change or grow, and so eventually become a bit stale. That's why I was thrilled when I discovered INVINCIBLE. Every time I see a new character pop up, I'm always hoping for the best--hoping for something that will thrill me. I'm usually let down, unfortunately. But with INVINCIBLE, here was a book that stirred those old feelings I had as a child when I first discovered those colorful icons. And yet, it was also modern and fresh and grabbed my interest from the start.

But here's where Robert is REALLY lucky: the artists he works with.

Because when it comes down to it-- without the artists who draw the stories Robert writes (the same goes for ANY writer, for that matter--but we're talking about INVINCIBLE here), all those stories amount to are words on paper; formless; colorless; without life. And of all those aforementioned creator-owned titles Robert pens, INVINCIBLE also happens to have had my favorite artists. When I first saw Cory Walker's (INVINCIBLE'S original artist, and co-creator) artwork, I was amazed. His use of minimal but precise and hard-edged line work was perfect for this book. And though his lines were hard as diamond--they were also fluid and full of motion--his characters suffused with emotion. I had seen others do that kind of work, but none of them as well as Cory. Bill Crabtree's color work was the perfect complement to the art as well. Bill is one of the most overlooked and under-rated colorists in the business. He is brilliant in his choices of hue--and bravely effective in his minimalism. In a business overstuffed with colorists who



can't seem to NOT over-render, Bill's is a singular voice. As far as I was concerned, Robert had an absolutely flawless art team in place. So you can imagine my grief when I learned that Cory would be leaving INVINCIBLE. I couldn't imagine ANYONE else taking his place. I think that Robert's ancestry must be Irish, though. Because without missing a beat, he found Ryan Ottley, who stepped right into Cory's shoes and made the book all his own. Ryan, I suspect, kept the simplicity of line to make for a smooth transition from Cory's work-- but there's an elasticity to Ryan's art--a sense of motion and energy that's uniquely his own. And his ability to depict intense expressions on his character's faces is absolutely wonderful. His is the kind of work that just immediately draws (no pun intended, unless you find it clever, in which case, I did it entirely on purpose) you in to the world of INVINCIBLE. More incredibly, Ryan is able to both pencil and ink INVINCIBLE, and keep it on schedule -- and almost every issue of the book is packed with intense action as well as heavy character interaction. He's a wonder to watch every month.

And so, as you can see, Robert is a very, very lucky fellow. WE, the readers and fans of INVINCIBLE are lucky as well, though, you see. We're lucky that Robert has the talent he has for writing, for creating imaginative stories and characters, and for his ability to find such talented and motivated artists. First, Cory Walker--and now Ryan Ottley along with Bill Crabtree, make INVINCIBLE a wonder not only to read each month.... but for ME (and I'm biased, as a guy who draws myself) to gawk at the artwork that truly brings Mark and company to such vivid life.

**MIKE  
WIERINGO**  
Durham, North Carolina

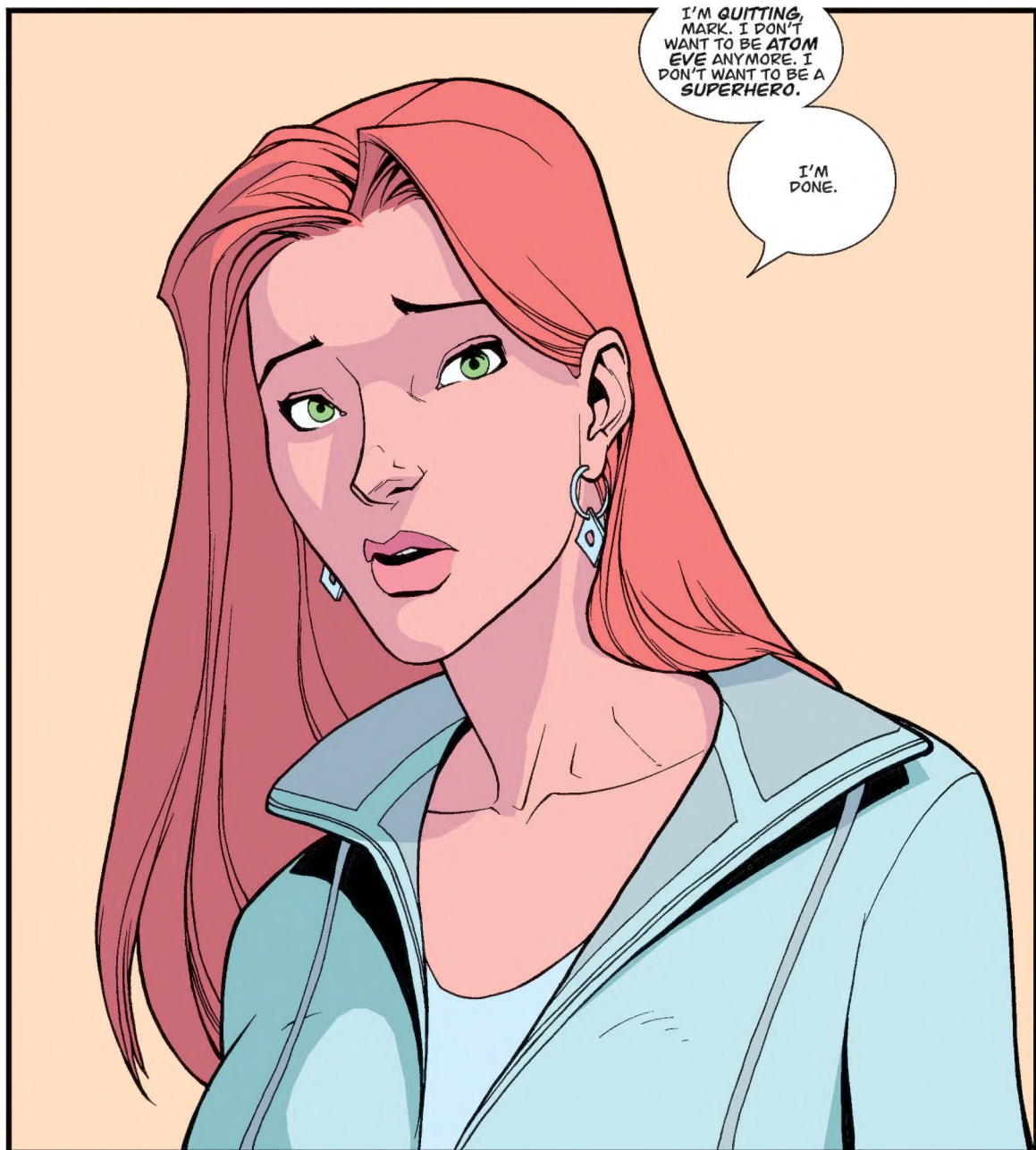
*Mike is the superstar artist and unabashed animal-lover who has had long, character-defining runs on Fantastic Four and The Flash, both collaborations with Mark Waid. He's also known for his creator-owned book Tellos, written by Todd Dezago. He's currently working on Friendly Neighborhood Spider-Man for Marvel Comics, written by Peter David.*



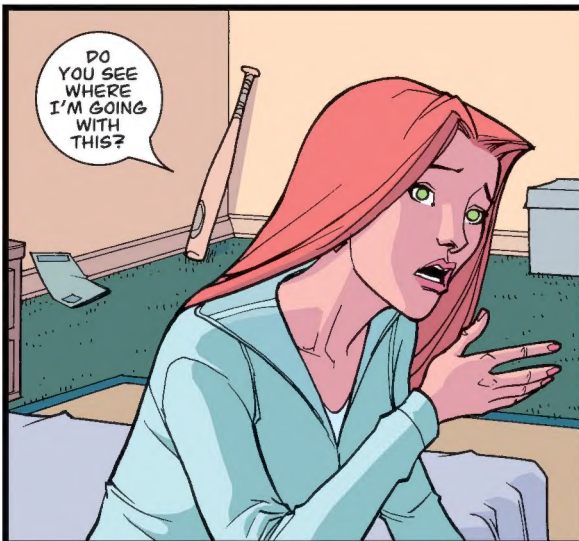
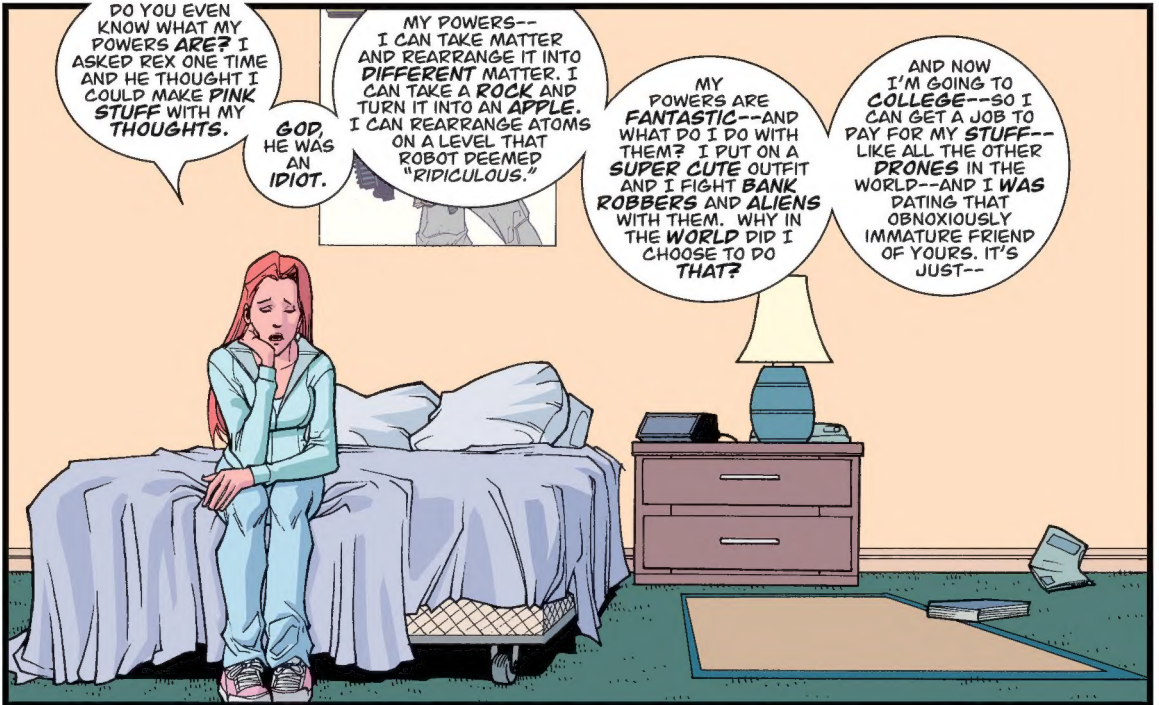
# CHAPTER ONE



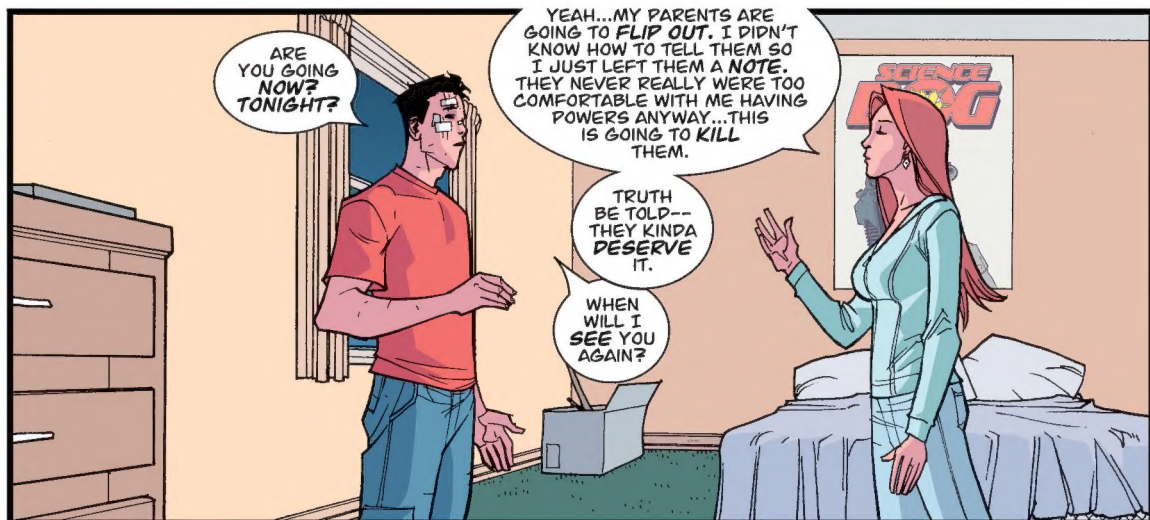
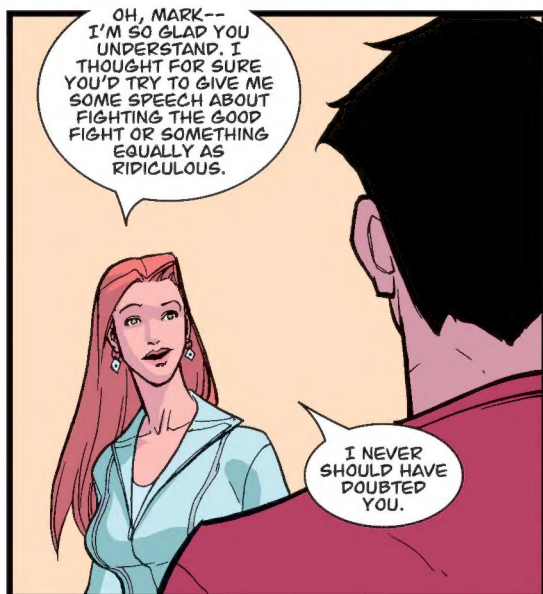
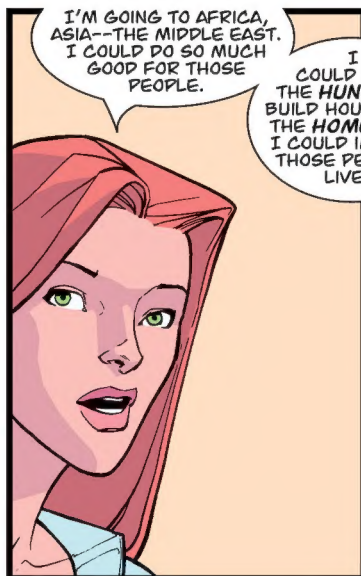




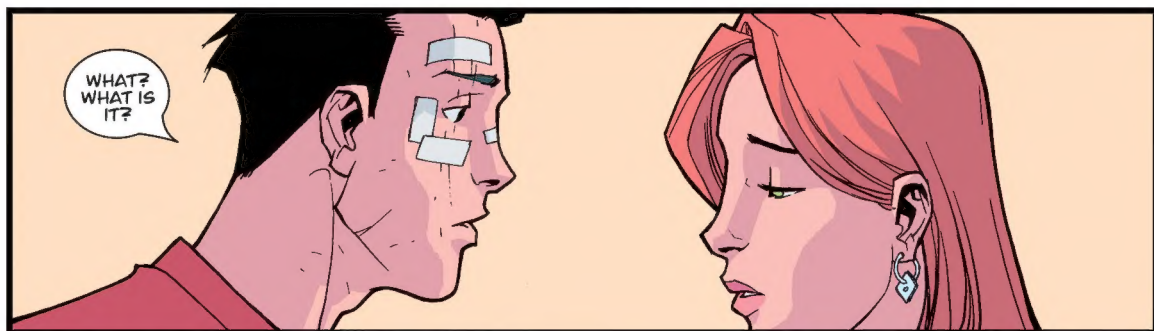
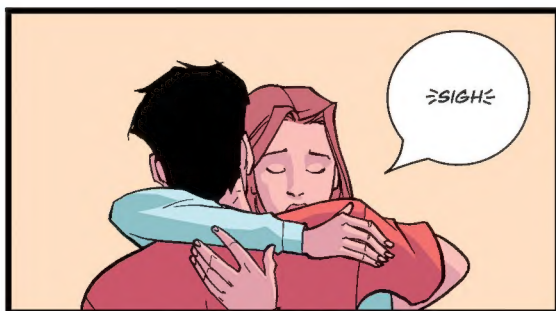
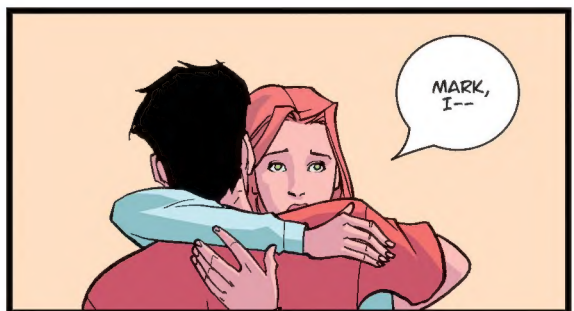
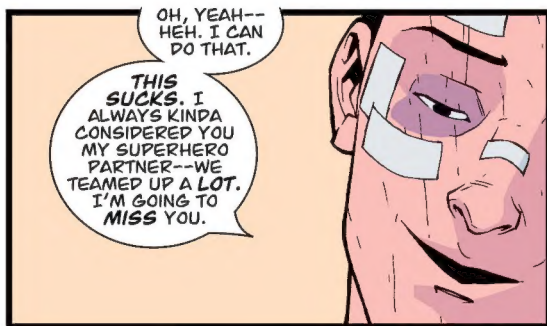
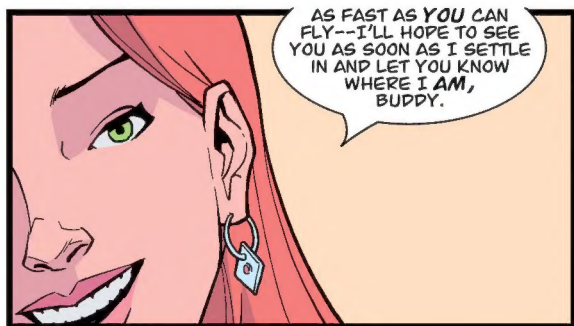




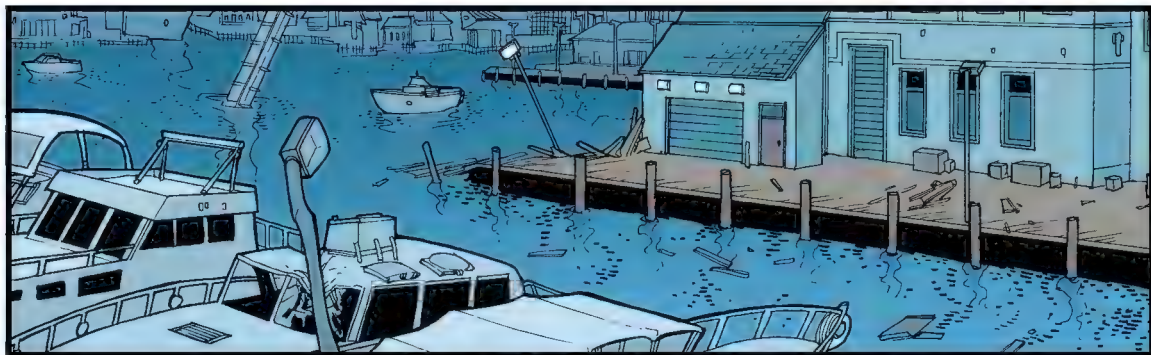












I'VE DISCOVERED SOMETHING NEW, ANGSTROM. I BELIEVE IT'S CALLED "ELBOW ROOM."

GOOD EYE, MAULER. YOU AND YOUR DOUBLE NEVER CEASE TO IMPRESS ME. I DISCOVERED A REALITY WHERE A VIRUS ATTACKED THE Y CHROMOSOME, KILLING ALL THE MALES ON EARTH. I THOUGHT MY OTHER DIMENSIONAL COUNTERPARTS DESERVED SOME R & R AFTER ALL THIS WAITING AROUND.

LET ME TELL YOU-- THEY'RE GETTING A ROYAL TREATMENT THERE. I'LL BE HEADING OVER MYSELF, SHORTLY. YOU'RE WELCOME TO COME ALONG AFTER YOU REACH A STOPPING POINT. WE'RE GOING TO HAVE QUITE A TIME.

THAT'S NOT SOMETHING THAT INTERESTS US NEARLY AS MUCH AS GETTING THIS PROJECT DONE SO WE CAN GET BACK TO OUR PLANS.

YOU'LL BE HAPPY TO KNOW WE PERFECTED THE PROCESS I USED TO DOWNLOAD MY MEMORIES INTO MY CLONE.

YOU MEAN THAT I USED, RIGHT, CLONE?

CAN WE NOT DO THIS? ANYWAY--EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE IN ORDER. WE ARE VERY CLOSE TO COMPLETING ALL THE MACHINES IN YOUR VARIOUS DIMENSIONAL SAFE HOUSES.

WE ARE PROBABLY ONLY A WEEK AWAY.

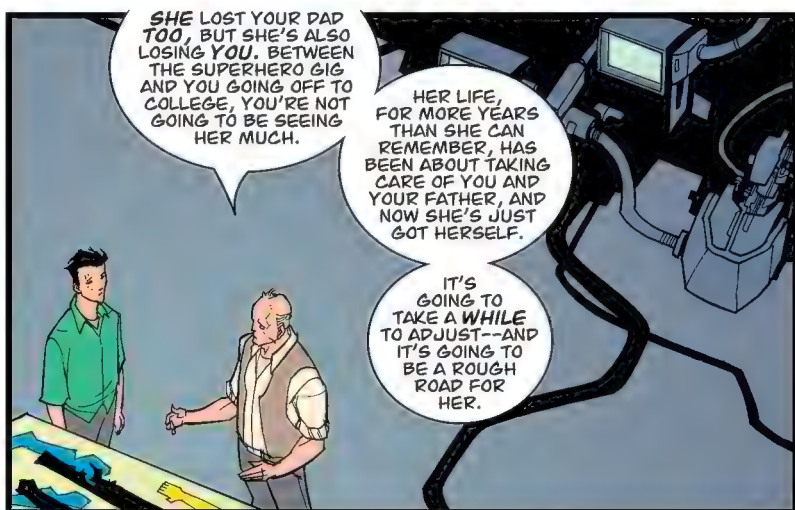
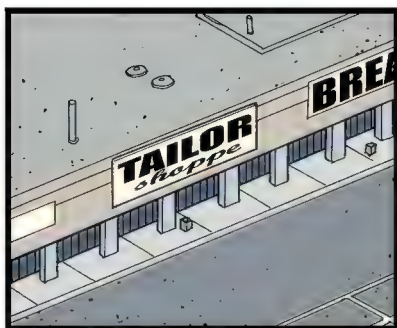
FANTASTIC. KEEP ME POSTED. I CAN'T KEEP ENTIRE CITIES WORTH OF LADIES WAITING.

I'LL BE BACK BY MORNING... MAYBE.

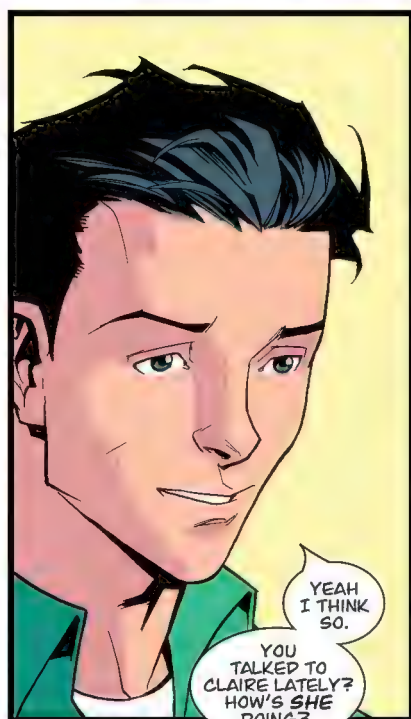
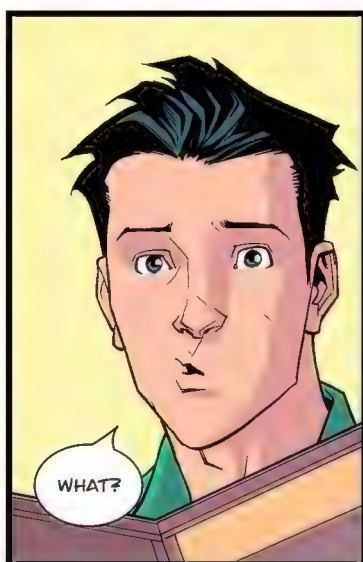




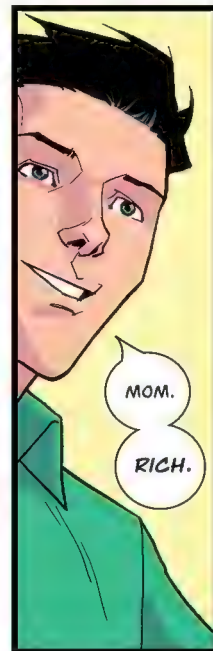
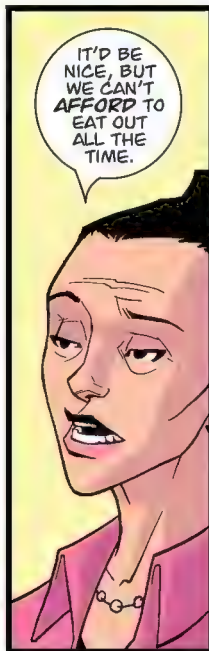
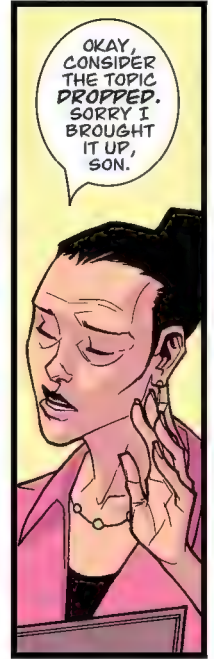




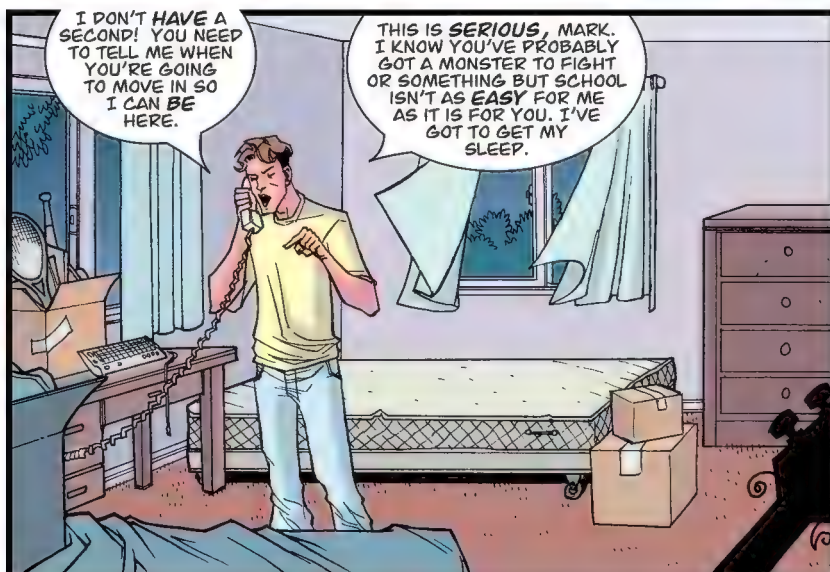
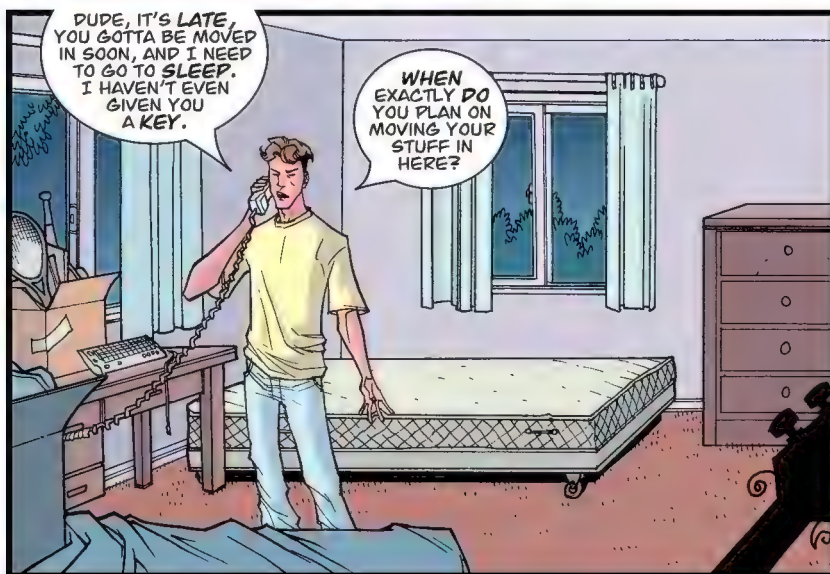
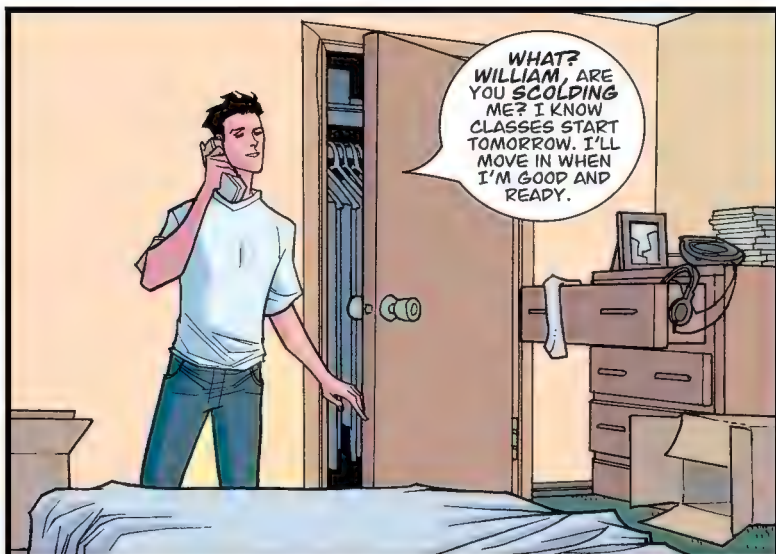
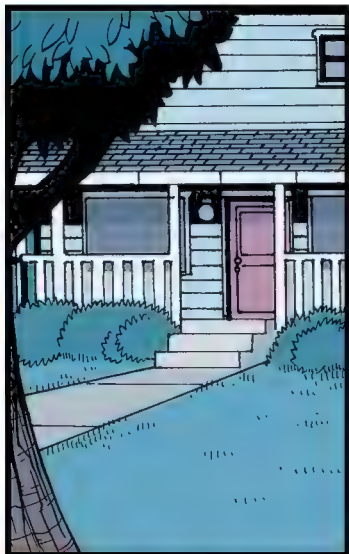




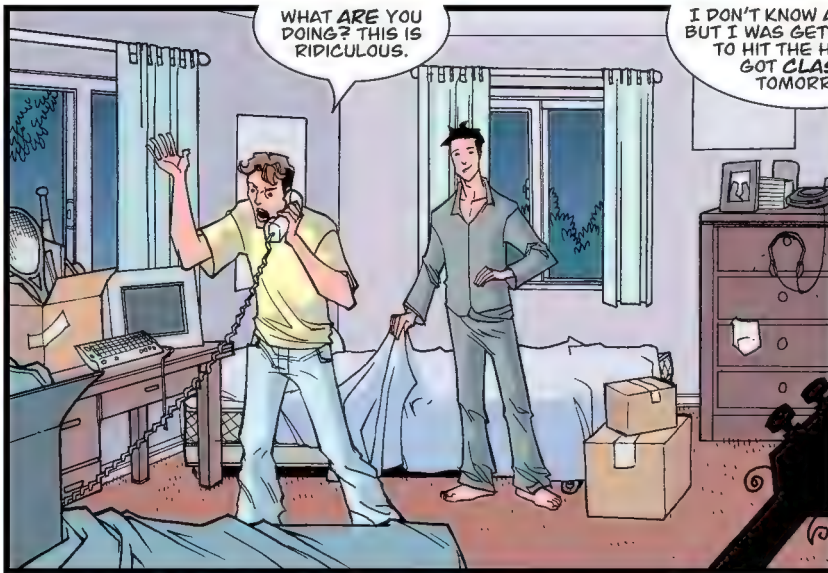
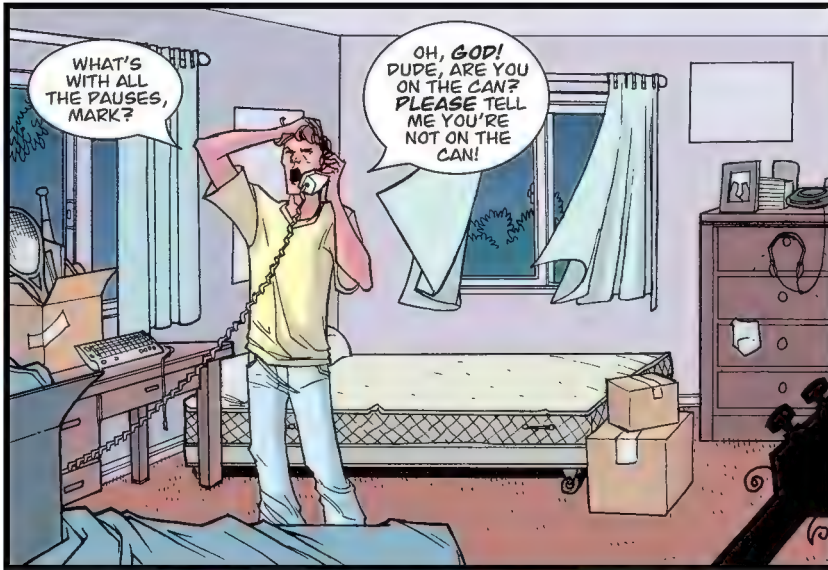








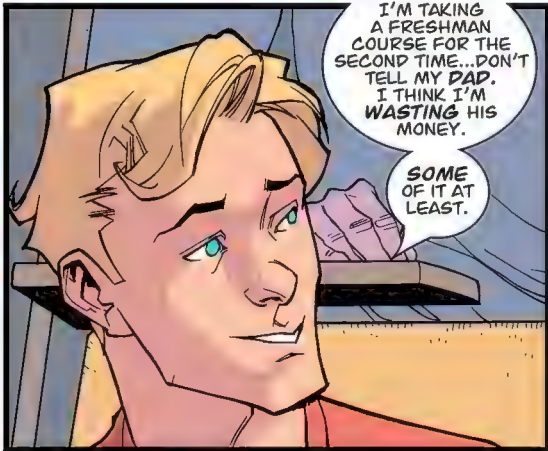
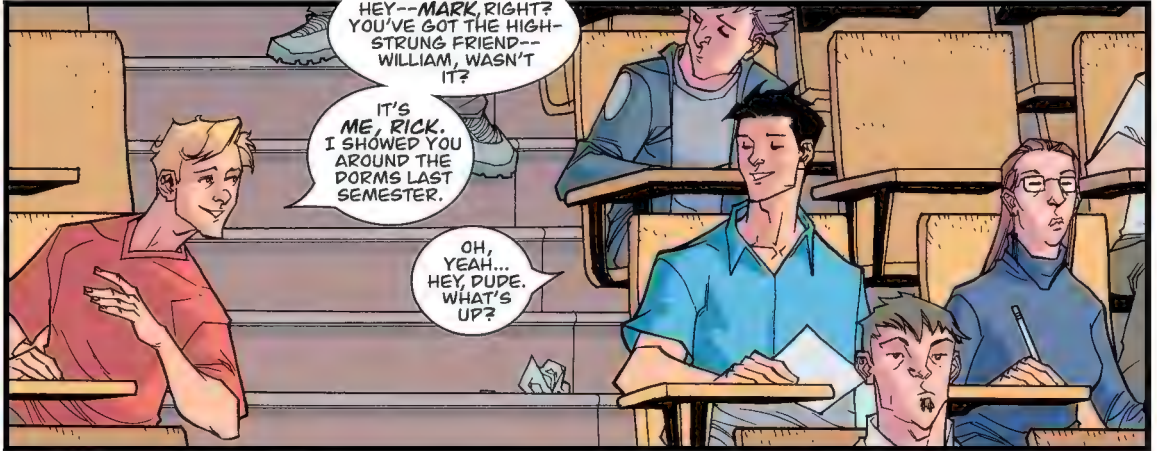
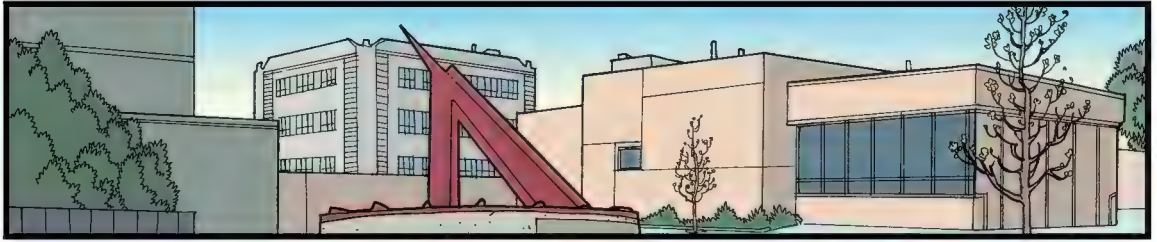




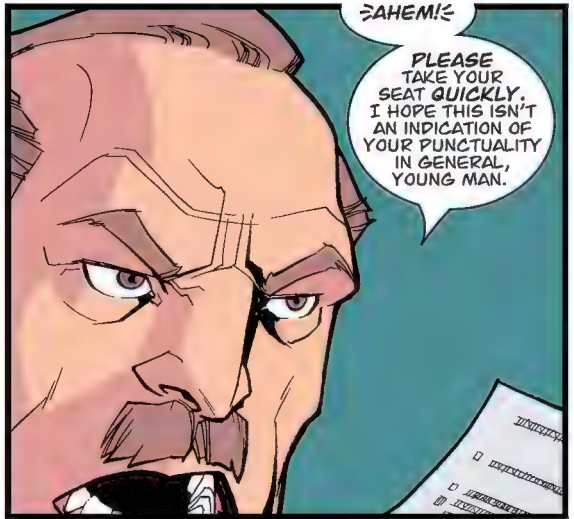
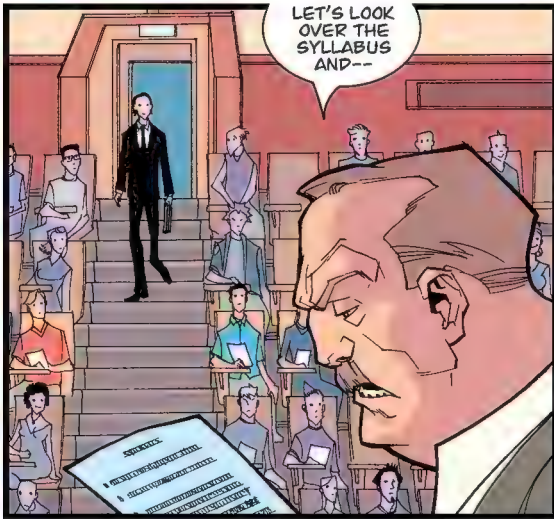




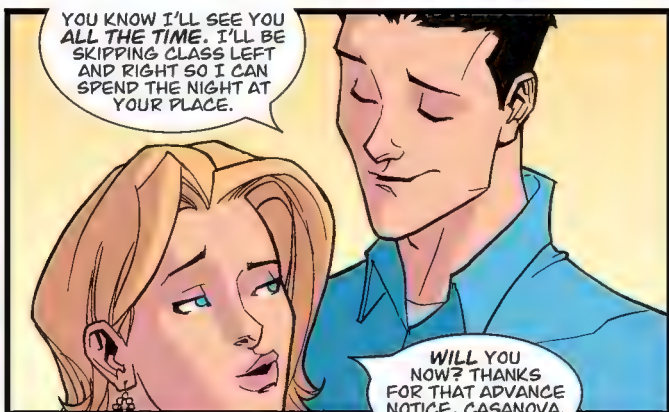
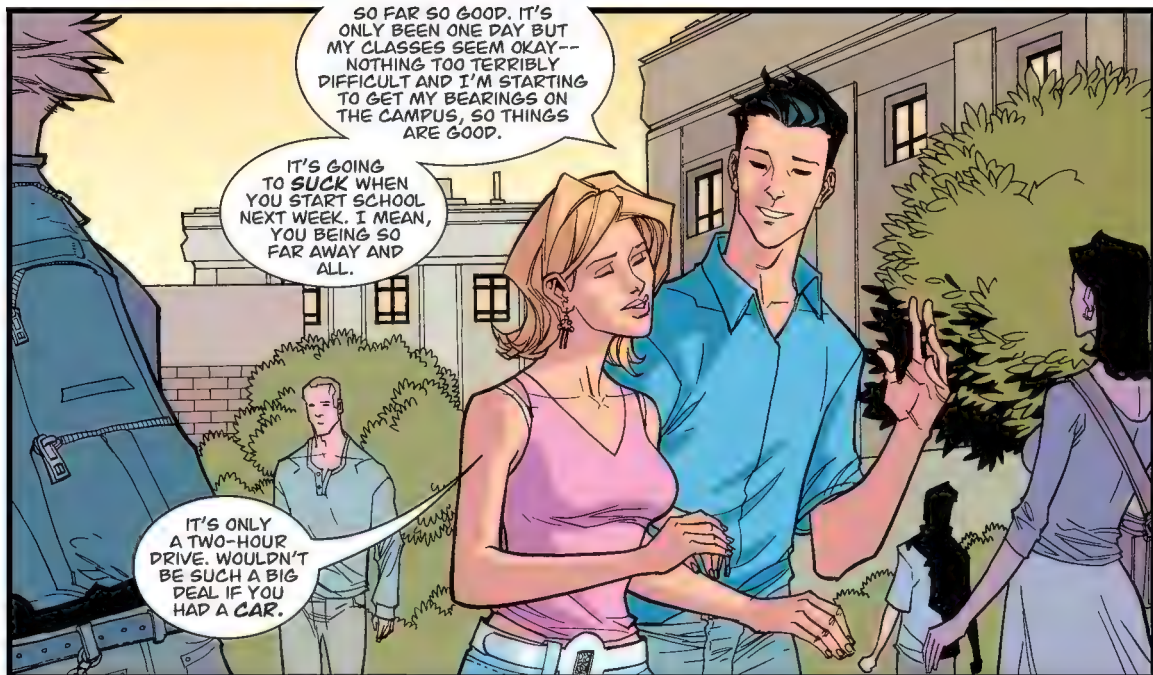








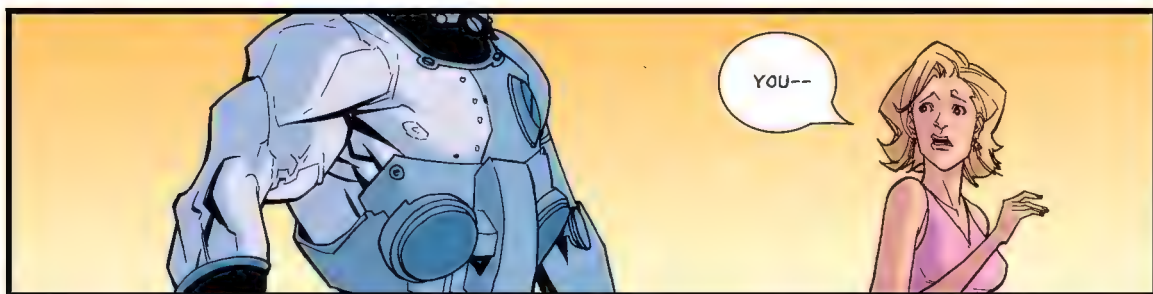
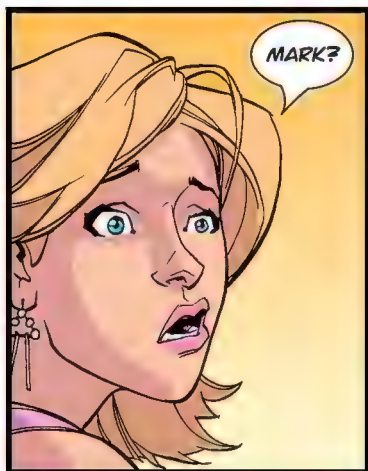
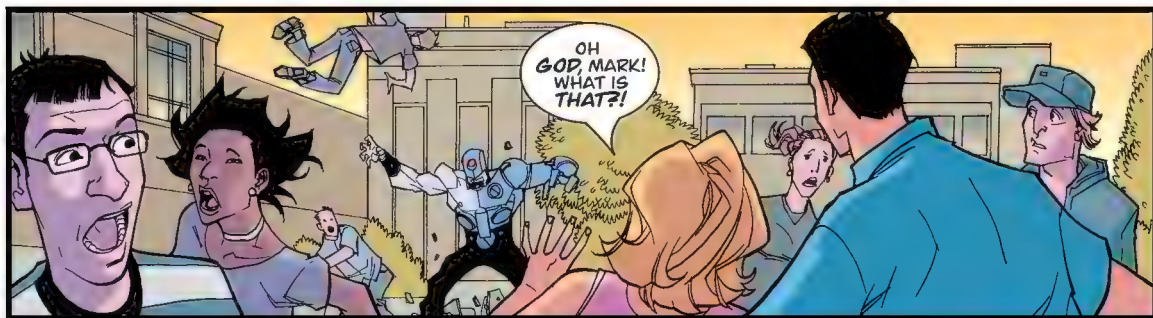


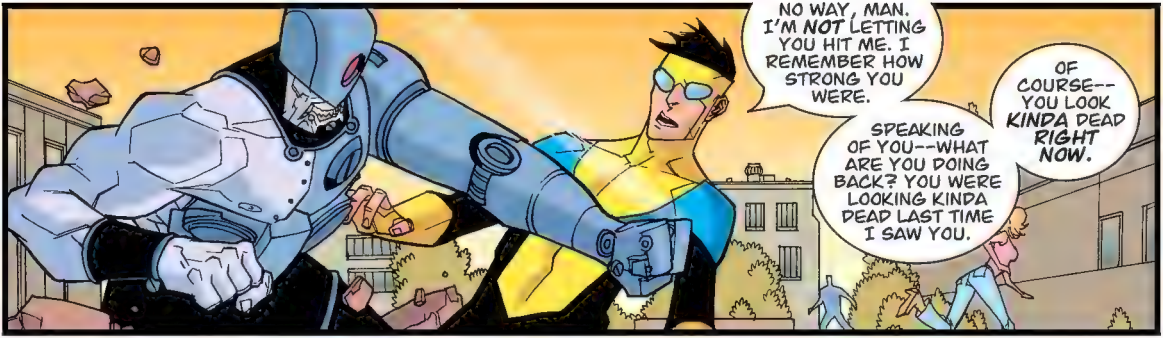








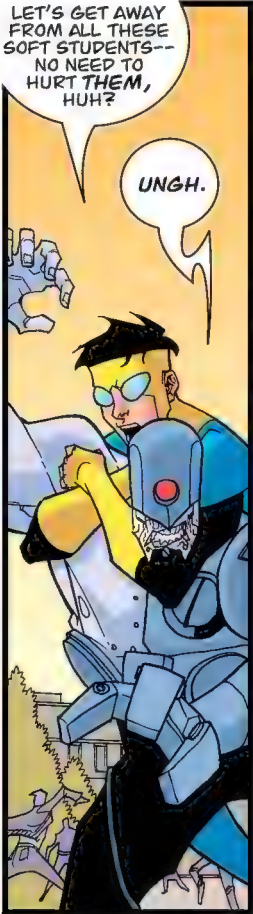




NO WAY, MAN.  
I'M NOT LETTING  
YOU HIT ME. I  
REMEMBER HOW  
STRONG YOU  
WERE.

OF  
COURSE--  
YOU LOOK  
KINDA DEAD  
RIGHT  
NOW.

SPEAKING  
OF YOU--WHAT  
ARE YOU DOING  
BACK? YOU WERE  
LOOKING KINDA  
DEAD LAST TIME  
I SAW YOU.

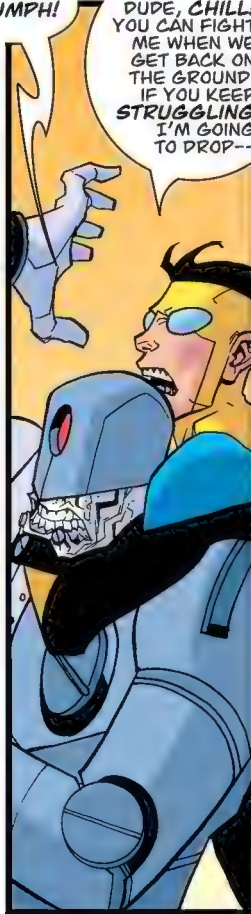


LET'S GET AWAY  
FROM ALL THESE  
SOFT STUDENTS--  
NO NEED TO  
HURT THEM,  
HUH?

UNGH.



WHAT  
WAS THAT?  
YOU TALK  
NOW?



MUMPH!

DUDE, CHILL!  
YOU CAN FIGHT  
ME WHEN WE  
GET BACK ON  
THE GROUND.  
IF YOU KEEP  
STRUGGLING  
I'M GOING  
TO DROP--

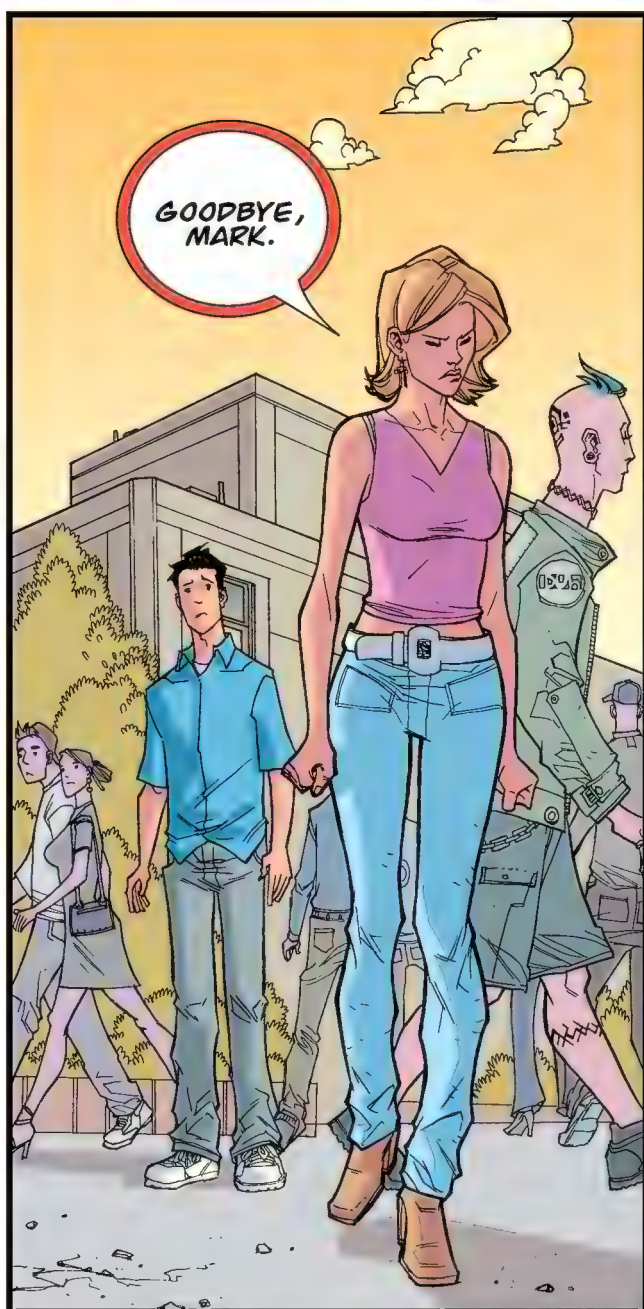
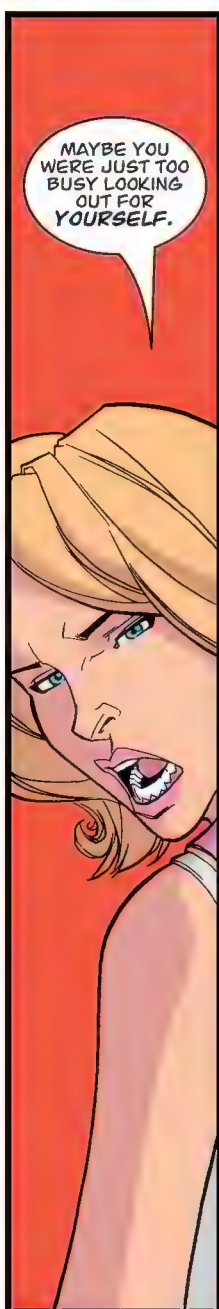
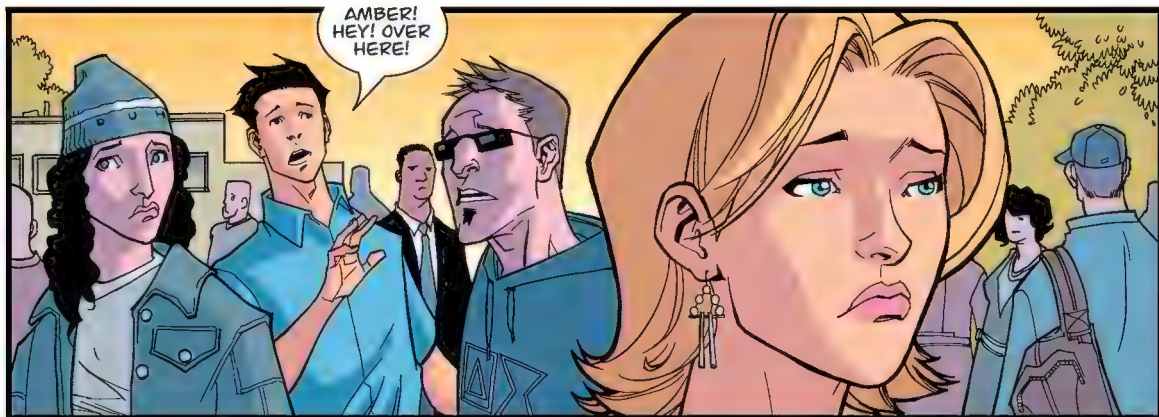


ACK!!

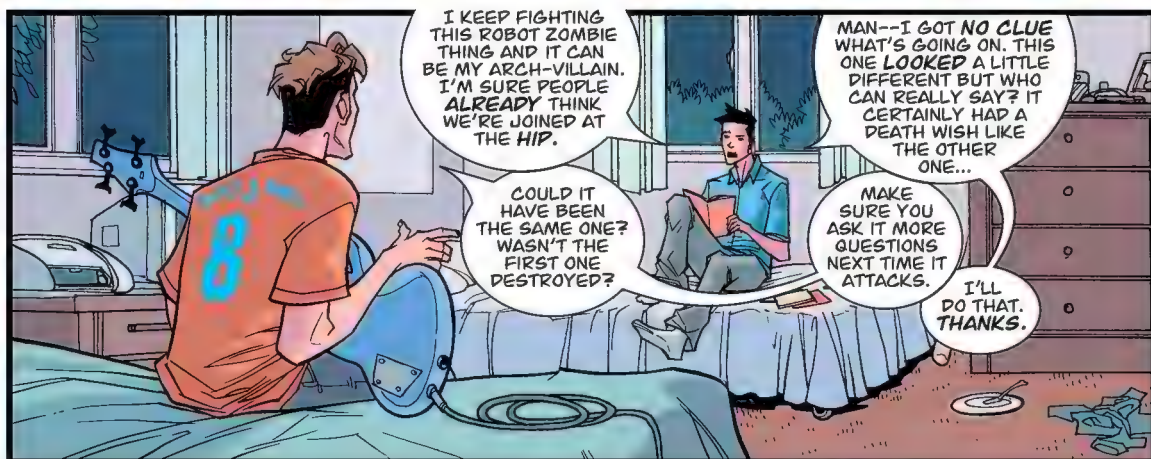
SKRICK!!



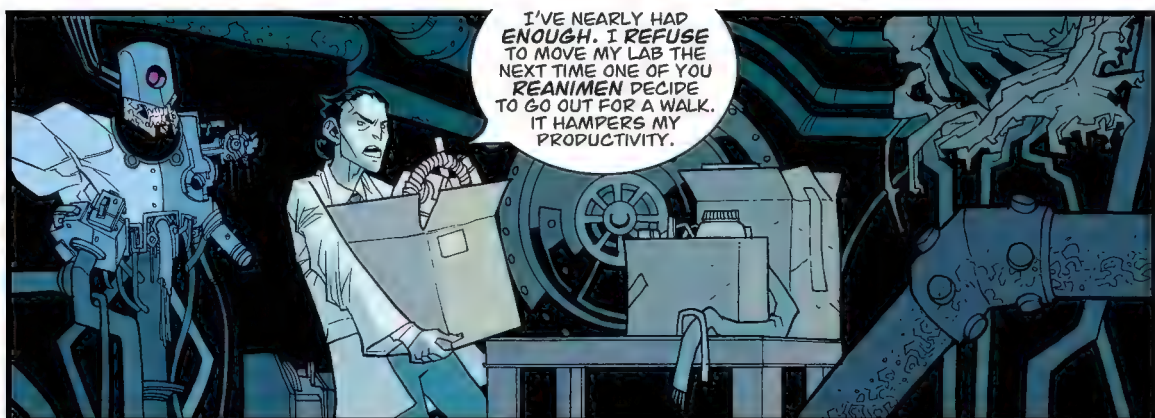
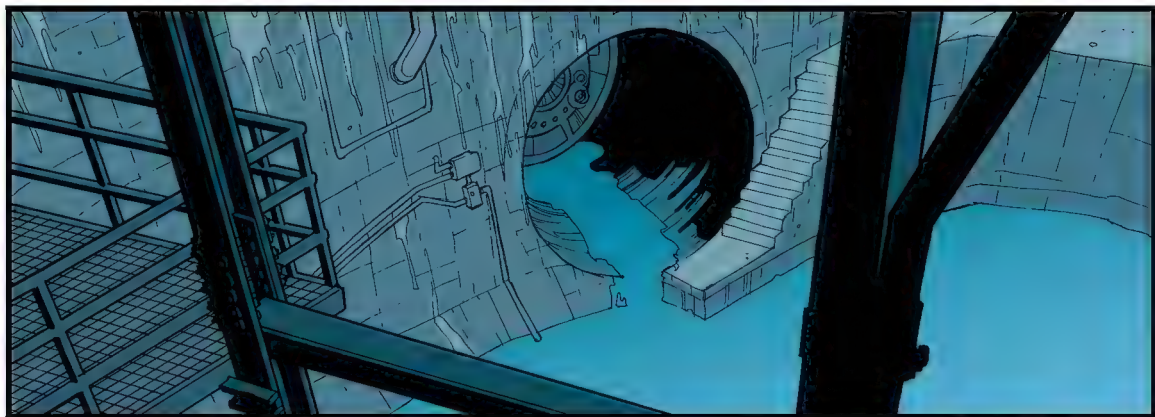




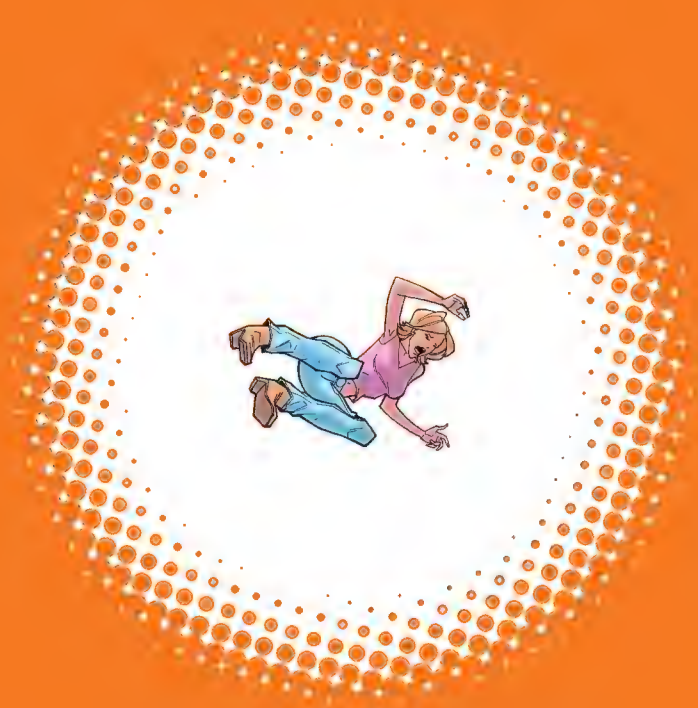








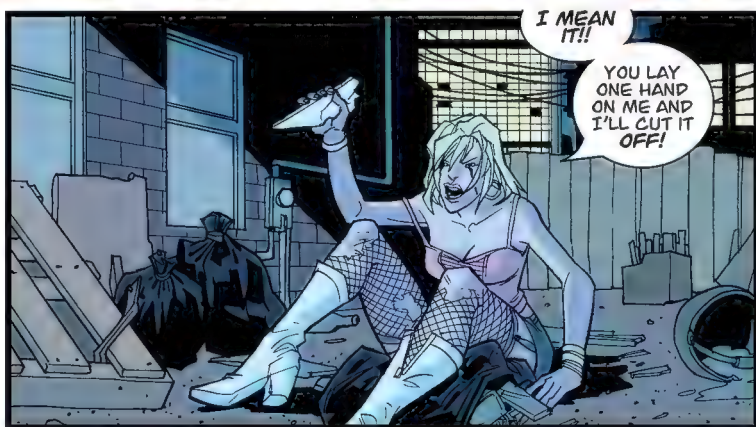




# CHAPTER TWO





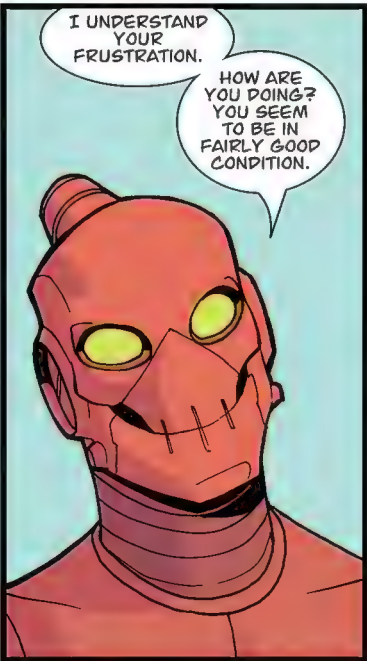
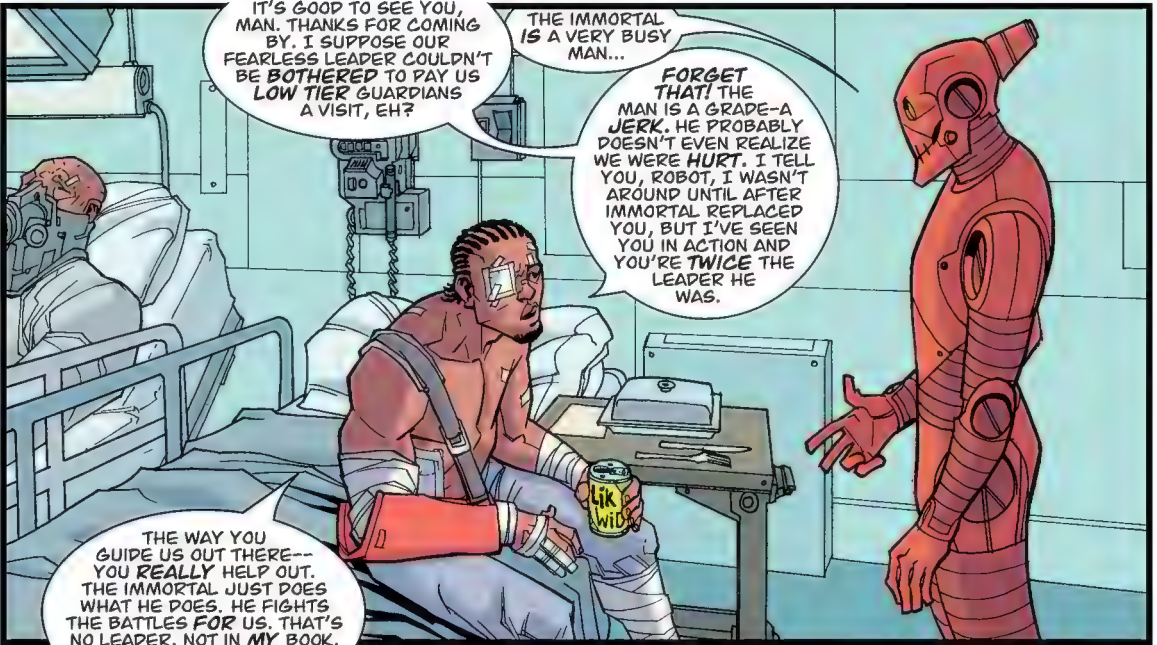
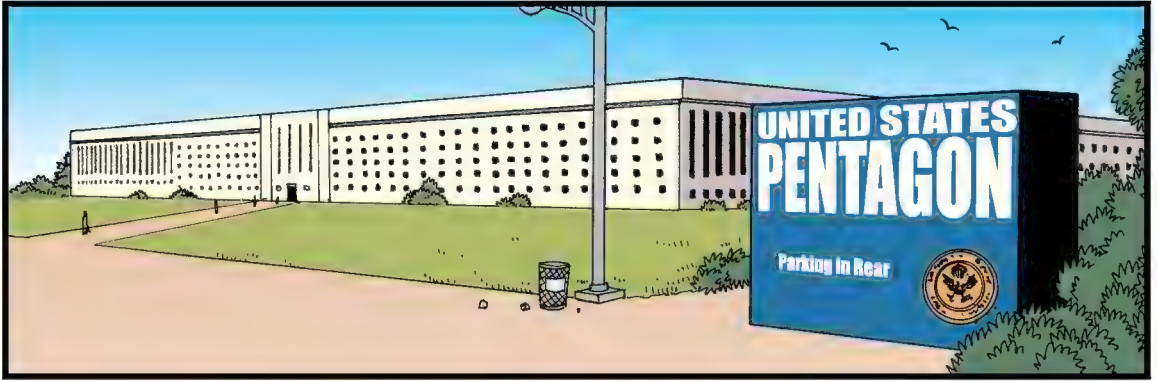


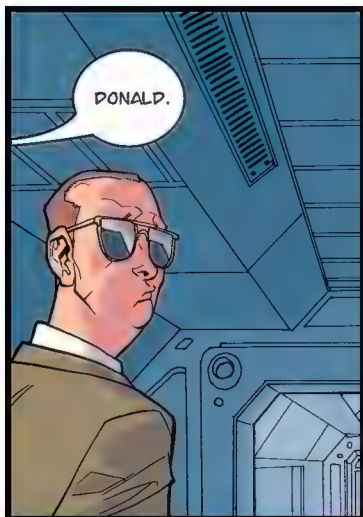




YOU  
WILL  
BE!







DONALD.

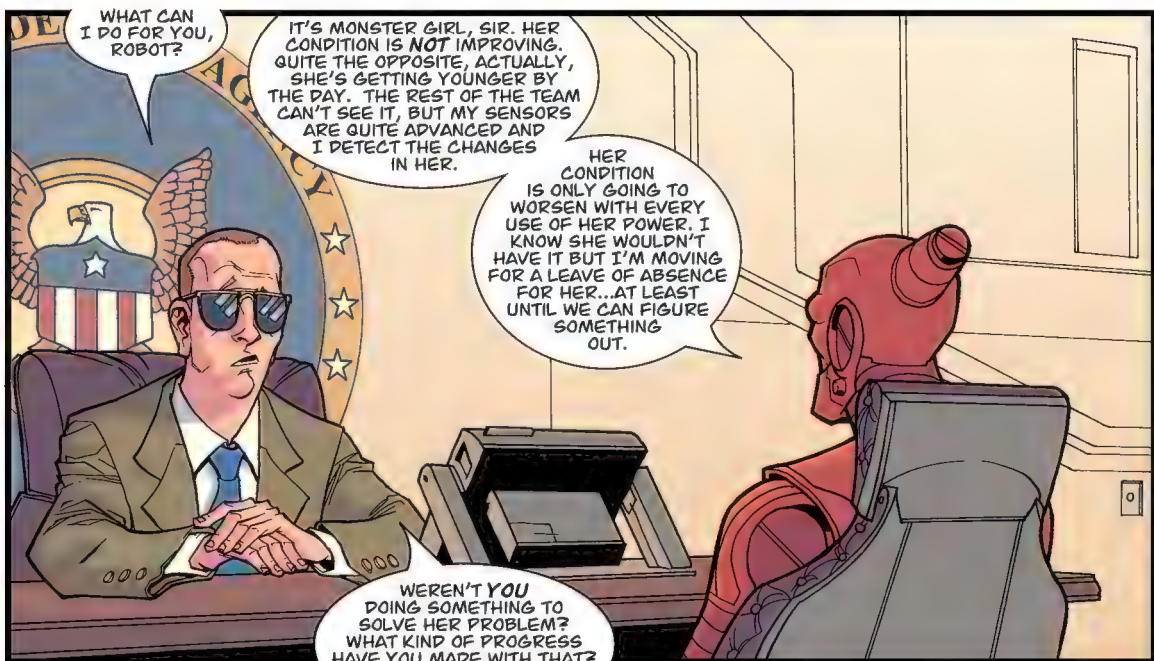
AH, ROBOT.  
I THOUGHT I  
HAD MISSED  
YOU.



NOT AT  
ALL. I WAS  
JUST MAKING  
MY WAY OVER  
HERE. YOU  
WANT TO GO  
TO YOUR  
OFFICE?



THAT  
WOULD  
PROBABLY  
BE BEST.  
FOLLOW  
ME.

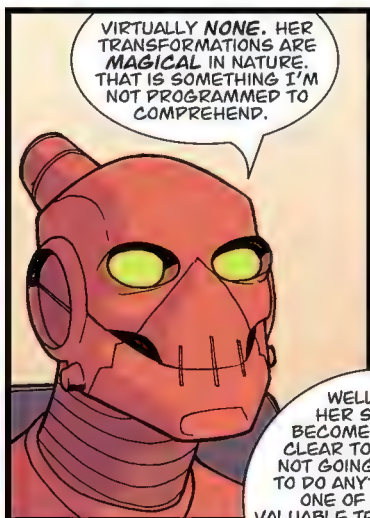


WHAT CAN  
I DO FOR YOU,  
ROBOT?

IT'S MONSTER GIRL, SIR. HER  
CONDITION IS **NOT** IMPROVING.  
QUITE THE OPPOSITE, ACTUALLY,  
SHE'S GETTING YOUNGER BY  
THE DAY. THE REST OF THE TEAM  
CAN'T SEE IT, BUT MY SENSORS  
ARE QUITE ADVANCED AND  
I DETECT THE CHANGES  
IN HER.

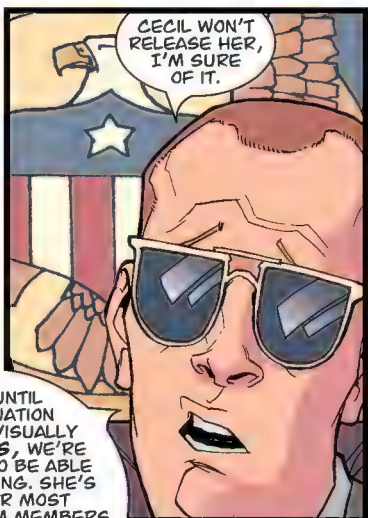
HER  
CONDITION  
IS ONLY GOING TO  
WORSEN WITH EVERY  
USE OF HER POWER. I  
KNOW SHE WOULDN'T  
HAVE IT BUT I'M MOVING  
FOR A LEAVE OF ABSENCE  
FOR HER...AT LEAST  
UNTIL WE CAN FIGURE  
SOMETHING  
OUT.

WEREN'T YOU  
DOING SOMETHING TO  
SOLVE HER PROBLEM?  
WHAT KIND OF PROGRESS  
HAVE YOU MADE WITH THAT?



VIRTUALLY **NONE**. HER  
TRANSFORMATIONS ARE  
**MAGICAL** IN NATURE.  
THAT IS SOMETHING I'M  
NOT PROGRAMMED TO  
COMPREHEND.

WELL, UNTIL  
HER SITUATION  
BECOMES VISUALLY  
CLEAR TO US, WE'RE  
NOT GOING TO BE ABLE  
TO DO ANYTHING. SHE'S  
ONE OF OUR MOST  
VALUABLE TEAM MEMBERS.



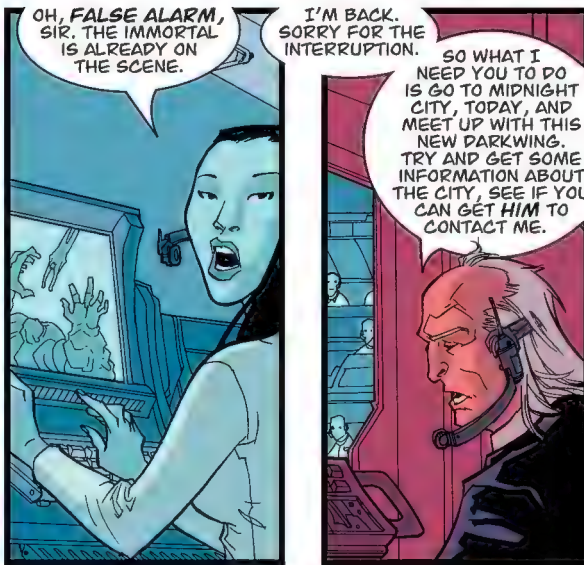
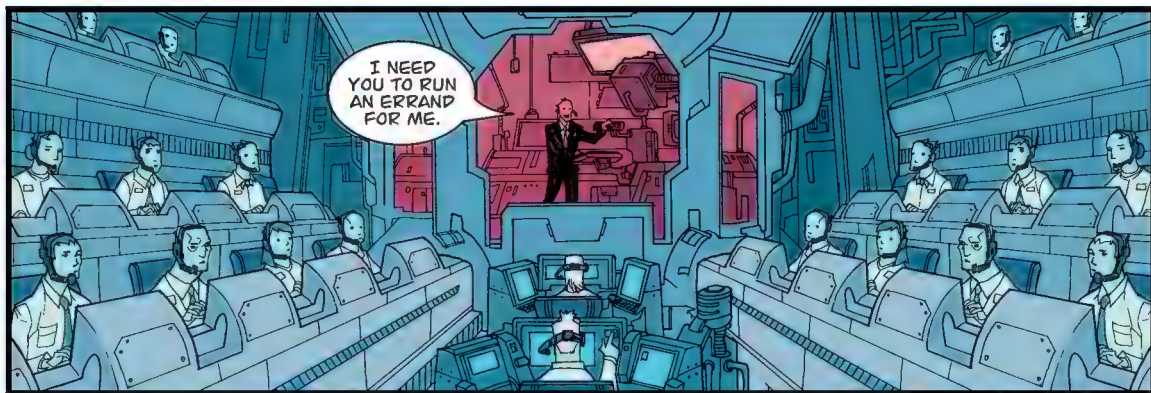
CECIL WON'T  
RELEASE HER,  
I'M SURE  
OF IT.



CAN I SPEAK  
WITH CECIL  
DIRECTLY?

UNFORTUNATELY,  
HE'S IN THE MIDDLE  
OF SOMETHING  
RIGHT NOW.

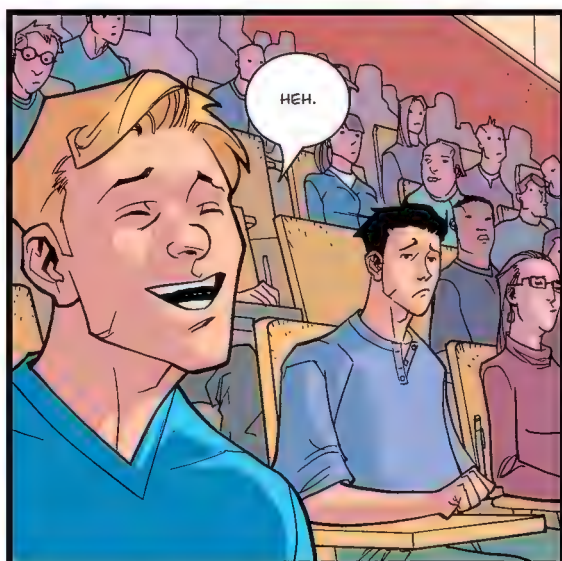






YES  
SIR.







I'M WORRIED. I HAVEN'T HEARD FROM HER SINCE SHE CAME TO VISIT. Y'KNOW, WHEN I DITCHED HER TO GO FIGHT THAT BIG ROBOT THING? SHE THINKS I LEFT HER ALONE AND RAN FOR THE HILLS.



I'VE CALLED AMBER EVERY DAY FOR TWO WEEKS. I DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO. I'M WORRIED-- I'M WORRIED THAT IT'S OVER.

WELL, SHE IS AT COLLEGE NOW. I'M SURE SHE'S GOT ALL KINDS OF OTHER GUYS AROUND TO KEEP HER BUSY.



WAS THAT TOO INSENSITIVE? YEAH, THAT WAS INSENSITIVE, WASN'T IT?

SORRY.



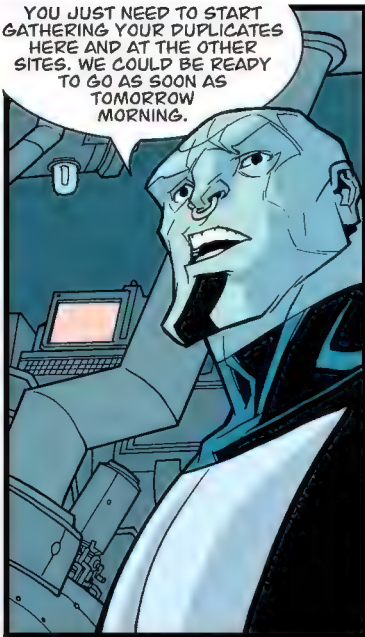
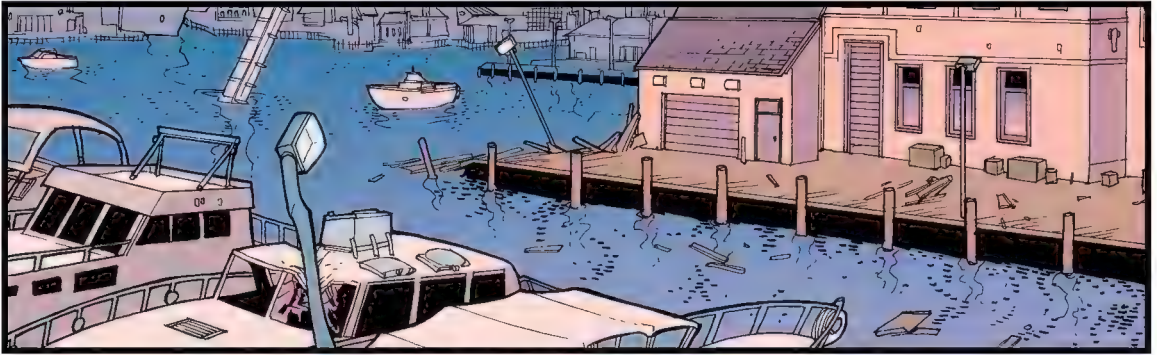
YEAH--THANKS FOR THAT. I'M GOING TO GO BEAT THE CRAP OUT OF A BUNCH OF BAD GUYS NOW.

I HOPE.

TELL EVE I SAID-- OH, SORRY. I FORGOT THAT SHE DUMPED YOU.

JERK.







I DON'T KNOW... I'VE BEEN HERE FOR HOURS. I'M NOT SEEING ANY SIGN OF THE GUY. YOU SURE THIS ISN'T A HOAX LIKE THAT RED RUSH THING?

NOT ACCORDING TO MY SOURCES.

WHOA! HOLD ON, I THINK I SEE HIM!



DARKWING, I PRESUME? NICE PLACE YOU GOT HERE-- LOTS OF SHAPE.



WHAT DO YOU WANT?



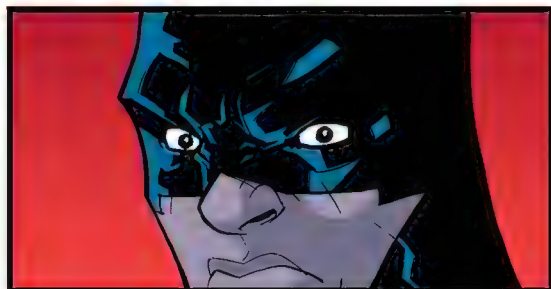
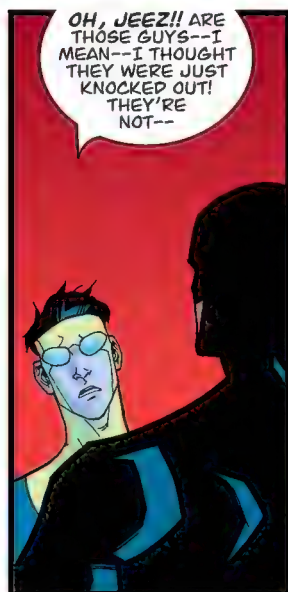
SECRETS TO IMMORTALITY. YOU GOT ANY POINTERS?

I DON'T-- OH, YOU THINK I'M HIM, DON'T YOU?

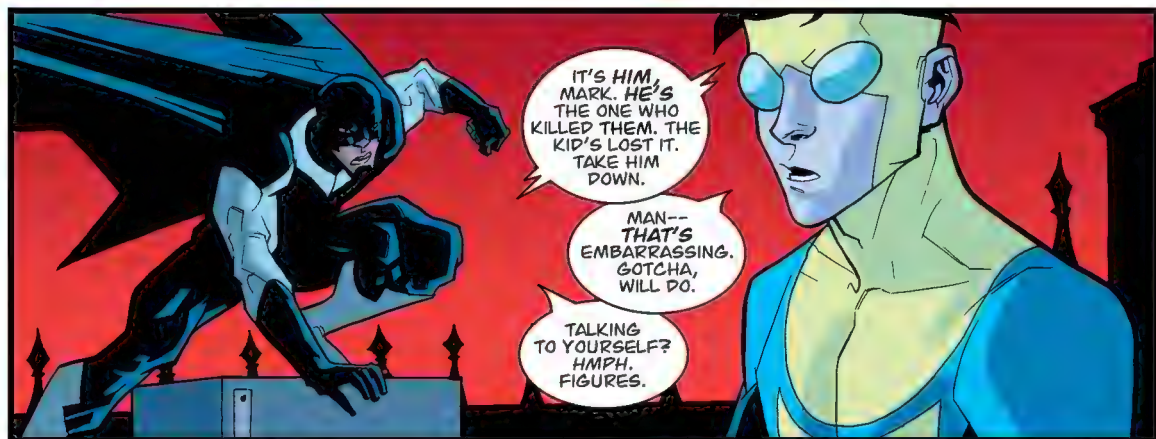


I'M SIMPLY CONTINUING THE LEGACY. I WAS NIGHT BOY. HIS ASSISTANT.

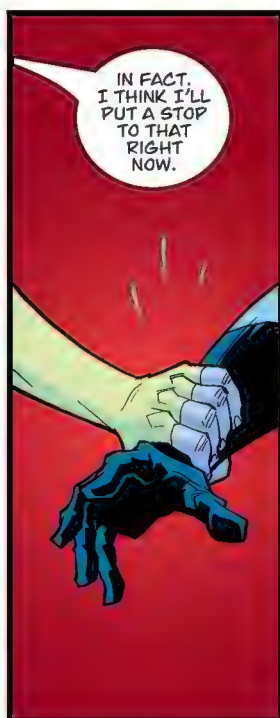






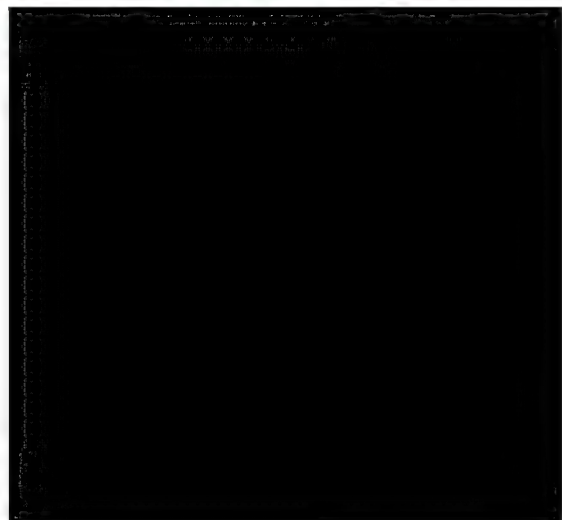
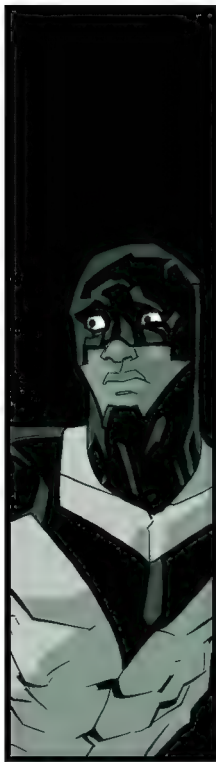






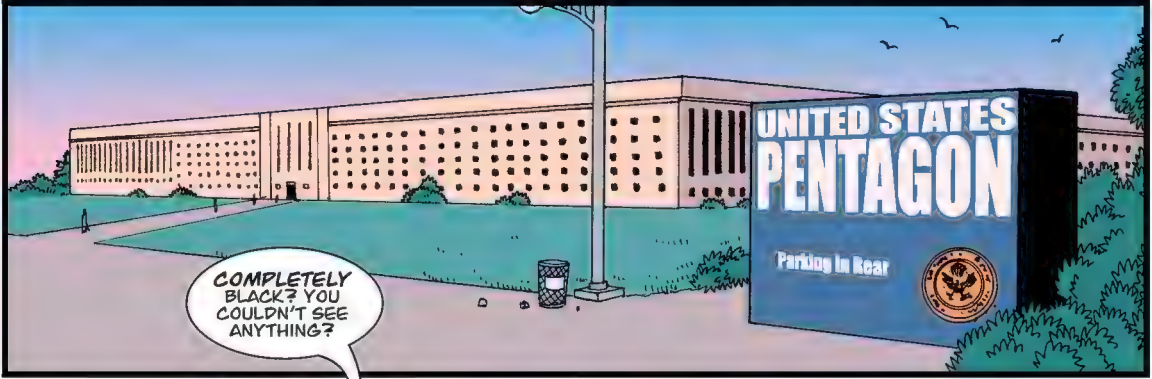




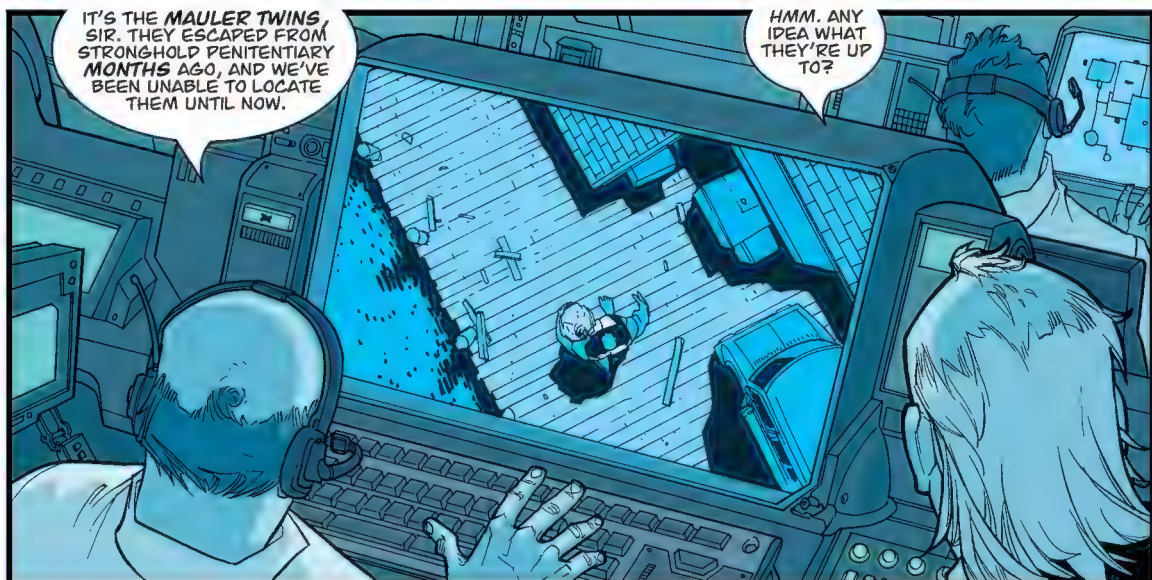




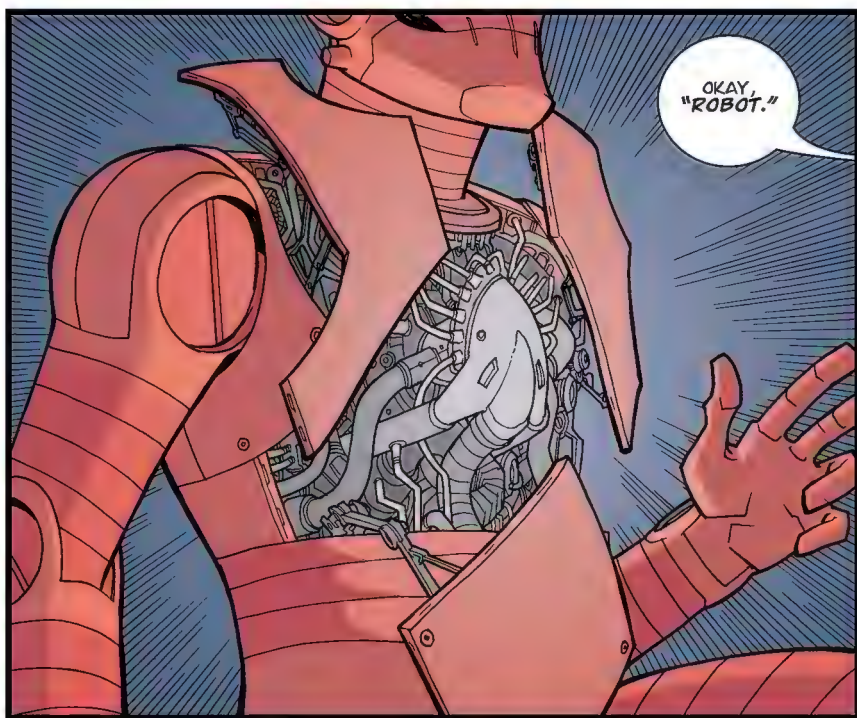
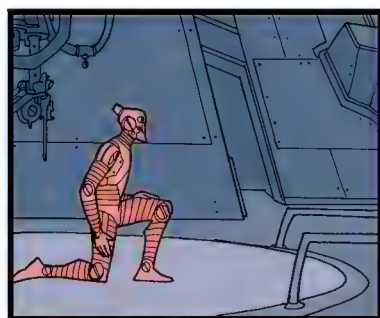
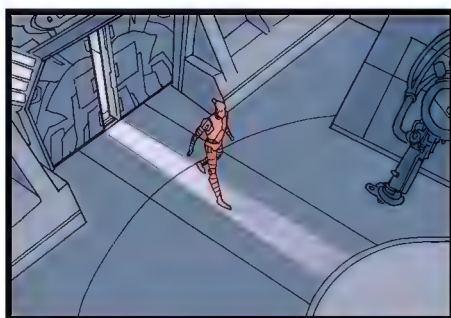
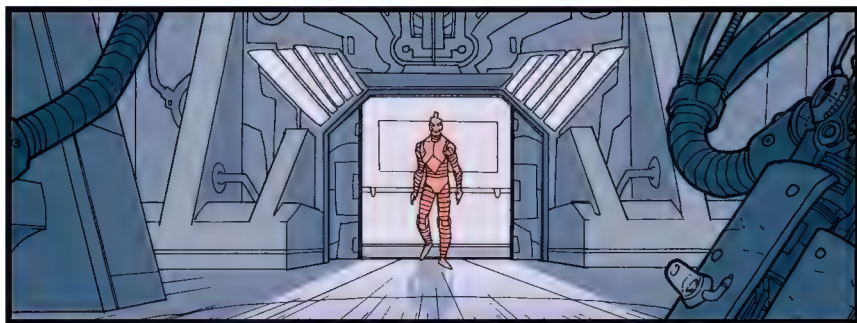
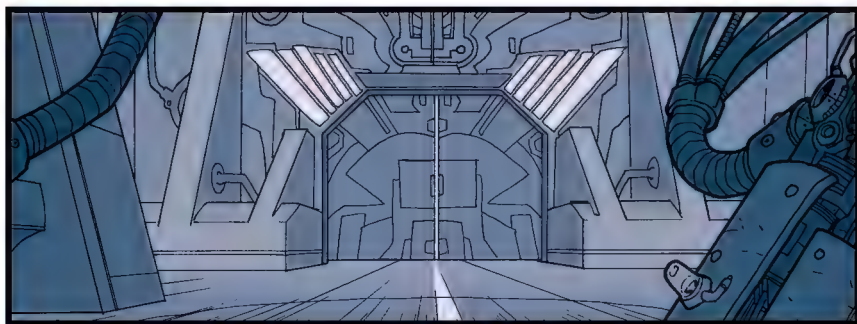




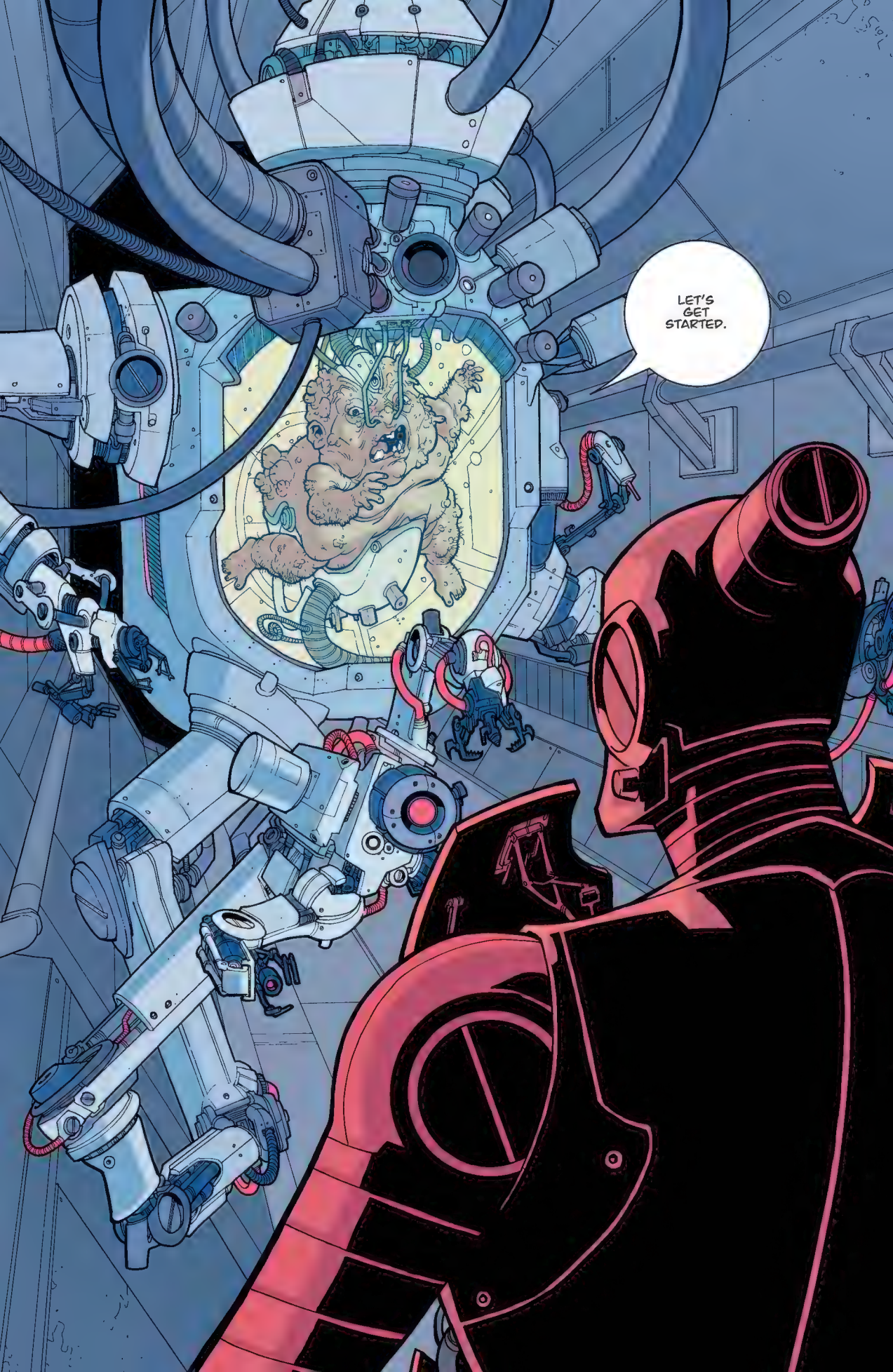










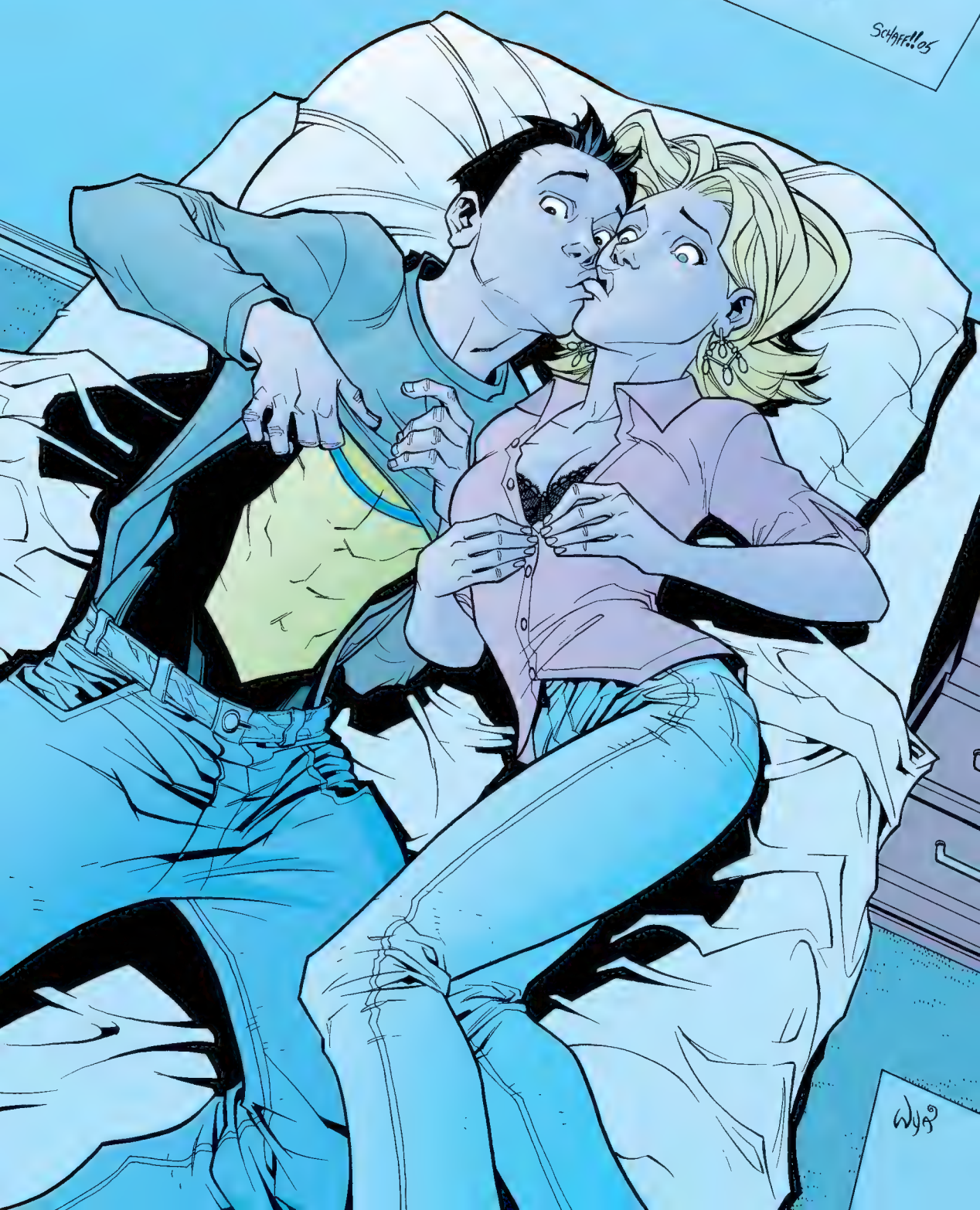


LET'S  
GET  
STARTED.

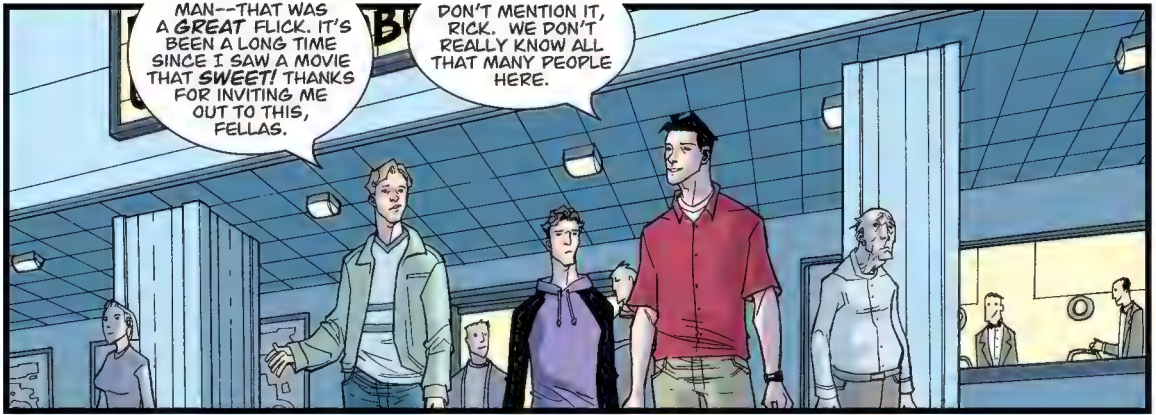




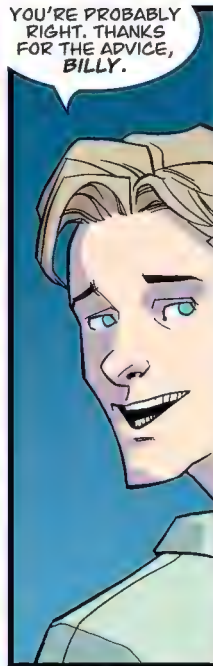
# CHAPTER THREE







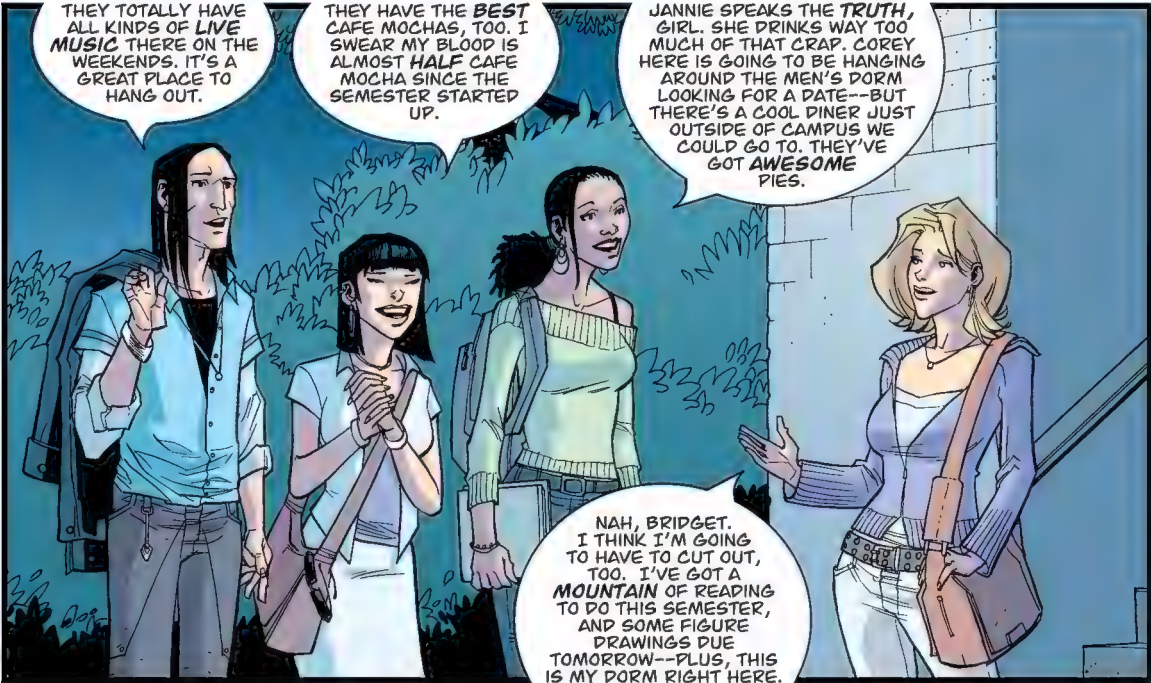
SERIOUSLY, THOUGH. MY ROOMMATE IS A REAL JERK. HE'S ALWAYS NAGGING ME ABOUT HOW MUCH I SLEEP. IT'S REALLY CRAPPY LIVING WITH THE GUY--HE'S WORSE THAN MY FATHER.







WOW, I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THAT PLACE WAS **THERE**. THANKS FOR TAKING ME THERE, GUYS.

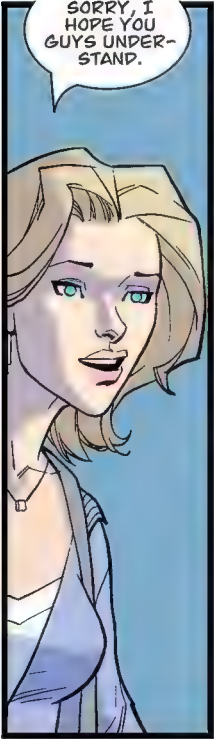


THEY TOTALLY HAVE ALL KINDS OF **LIVE MUSIC** THERE ON THE WEEKENDS. IT'S A GREAT PLACE TO HANG OUT.

THEY HAVE THE **BEST** CAFE MOCHAS, TOO. I SWEAR MY BLOOD IS ALMOST **HALF CAFE MOCHA** SINCE THE SEMESTER STARTED UP.

JANNIE SPEAKS THE **TRUTH**, GIRL. SHE DRINKS WAY TOO MUCH OF THAT CRAP. COREY HERE IS GOING TO BE HANGING AROUND THE MEN'S DORM LOOKING FOR A DATE--BUT THERE'S A COOL DINER JUST OUTSIDE OF CAMPUS WE COULD GO TO. THEY'VE GOT **AWESOME PIES**.

NAH, BRIDGET. I THINK I'M GOING TO HAVE TO CUT OUT, TOO. I'VE GOT A **MOUNTAIN OF READING** TO DO THIS SEMESTER, AND SOME FIGURE DRAWINGS DUE TOMORROW--PLUS, THIS IS MY DORM RIGHT HERE.



SORRY, I HOPE YOU GUYS UNDERSTAND.



DON'T SWEAT IT, GIRLFRIEND. JUST BECAUSE WE DON'T DO OUR HOMEWORK DOESN'T MEAN WE CARE IF YOU DO IT. **HAVE FUN**.

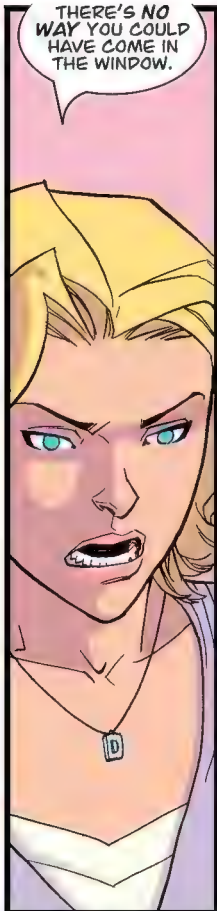
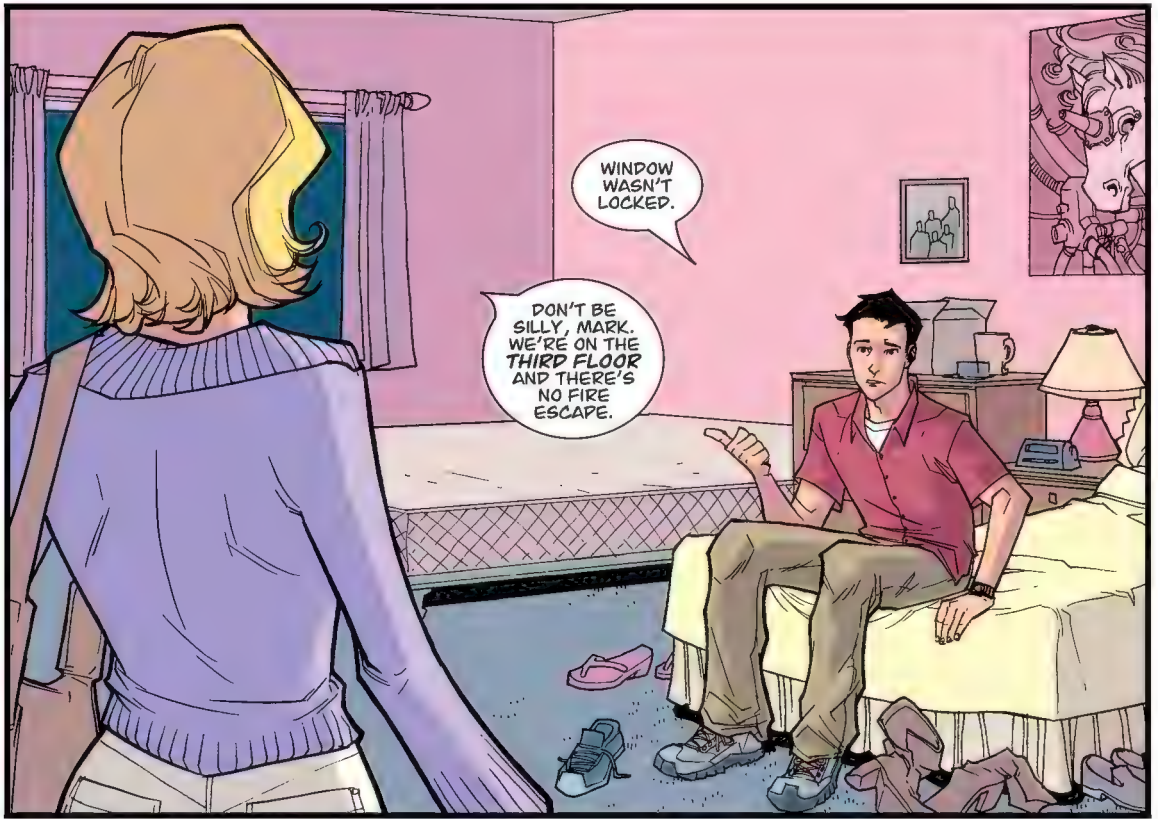


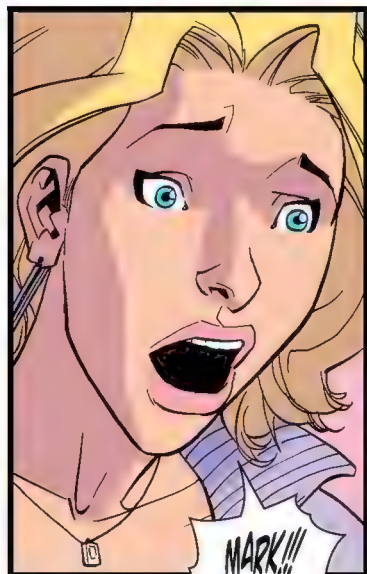
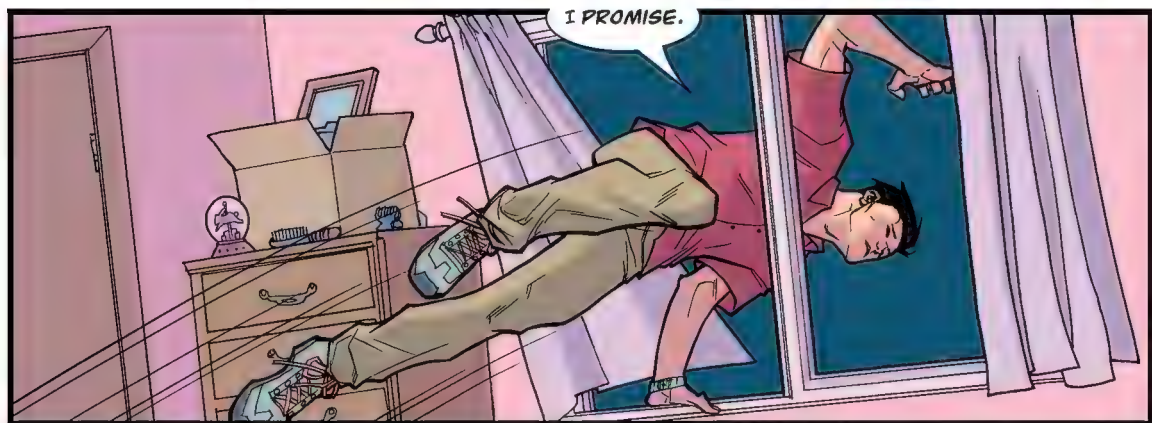
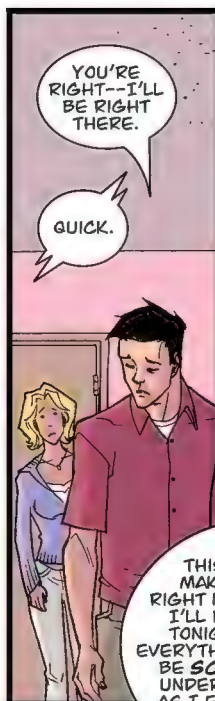
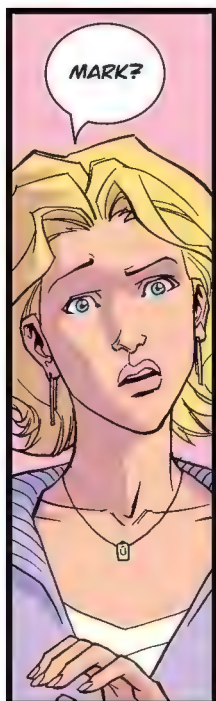
I DO MY HOMEWORK.



HOW'D YOU GET IN HERE?



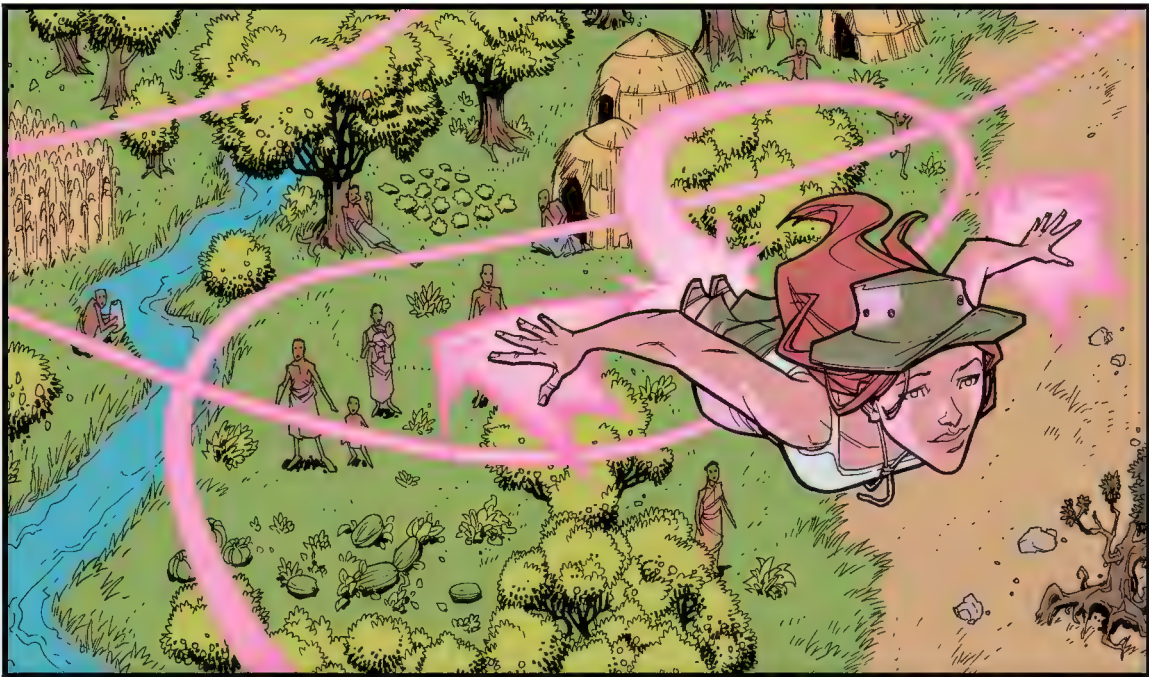
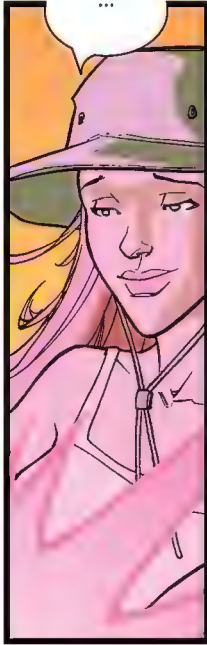
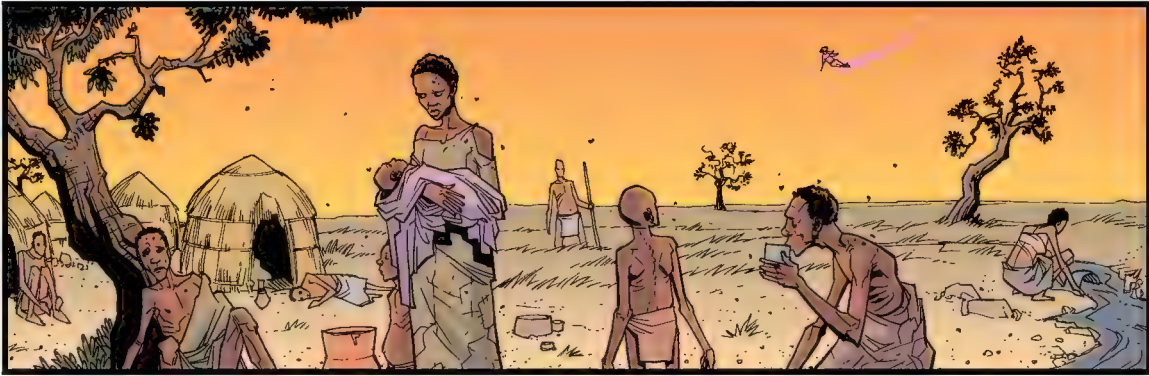




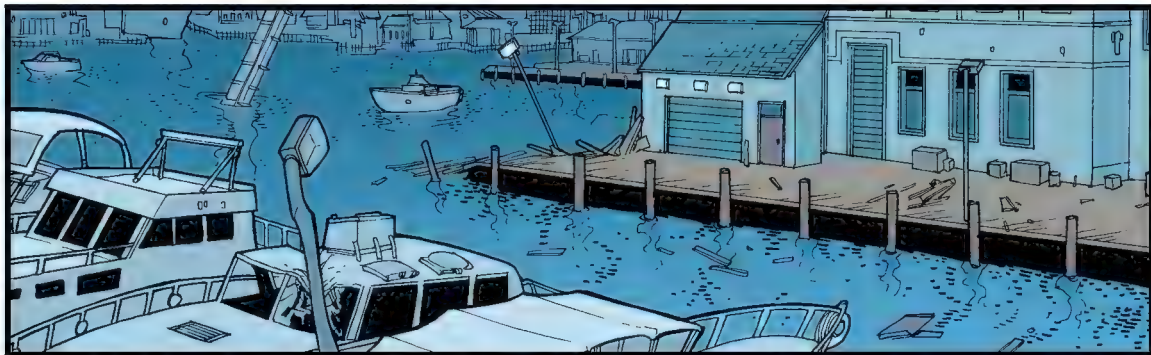












IT IS TIME, ANGSTROM LEVY.

WE HAVE EVERYTHING WE NEED. ALL THE MACHINES ACROSS THE DOZEN WORLDS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED. I HAVE CONSULTED WITH THE OTHERS BROUGHT IN AFTER YESTERDAY'S SETBACK AND WE'RE ALL READY TO GO. THANKS FOR CONTACTING THEM FOR US, BY THE WAY. THEY'VE BEEN A HUGE HELP.

IF YOU CAN HAVE ALL YOUR DUPLICATES HERE TOMORROW MORNING--WE'LL COMPLETE THE PROCESS TOMORROW. WE COULD BE DONE BY LUNCH-TIME. THIS TIME FOR SURE.

BY THIS TIME TOMORROW, ALL THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR DIMENSIONS WILL BE YOURS--AND YOU'LL FINALLY BE ABLE TO EXPLORE THE MULTIVERSE WITHOUT HAVING TO RISK ENTERING A WORLD TOO HARSH TO SURVIVE IN.

I TAKE IT YOU ARE PLEASED?







HI, BRIDGET, THANKS FOR COMING.

NO SWEAT, SISTER. YOU DECIDE AGAINST THE HOMEWORK TONIGHT?



NO, IT--I'M GLAD YOU CAME. I NEEDED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT SOME STUFF.

WHAT'S WITH THE EMPTY BED? YOUR ROOMMATE DIE?

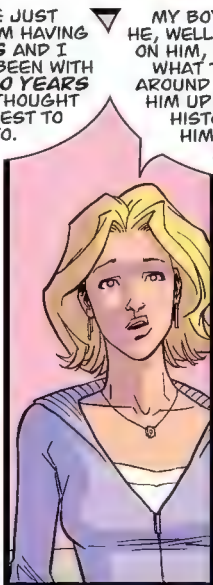


DROPPED OUT, COULDN'T GET FUNDING-- SOMETHING. BUT ANYWAY, I REALLY WANTED TO TALK TO YOU.

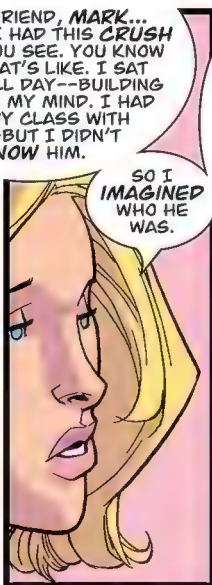
THEN SPIT IT OUT, GIRL. I'M ALL EARS.



I KNOW WE JUST MET--BUT I'M HAVING PROBLEMS AND I KNOW YOU'VE BEEN WITH PAUL FOR TWO YEARS AND I JUST THOUGHT YOU'D BE BEST TO TALK TO.



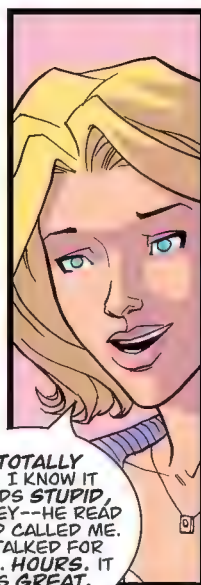
MY BOYFRIEND, MARK... HE, WELL, I HAD THIS CRUSH ON HIM, YOU SEE. YOU KNOW WHAT THAT'S LIKE. I SAT AROUND ALL DAY--BUILDING HIM UP IN MY MIND. I HAD HISTORY CLASS WITH HIM--BUT I DIDN'T KNOW HIM.



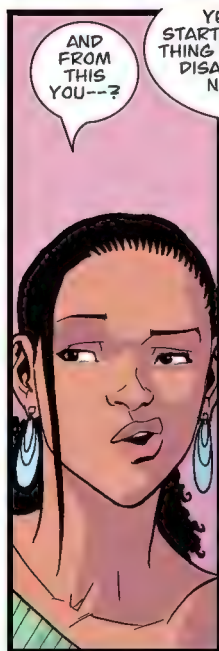
SO I IMAGINED WHO HE WAS.



I THOUGHT ABOUT HOW HE WOULD REPLY TO THINGS I COULD SAY TO HIM. I IMAGINED WHAT HE DID FOR FUN. I MADE HIM IN MY HEAD TO BE THIS GREAT GUY-- THEN I GAVE HIM A NOTE.



I TOTALLY DID. I KNOW IT SOUNDS STUPID, BUT HEY--HE READ IT, AND CALLED ME. WE TALKED FOR LIKE... HOURS. IT WAS GREAT.



AND FROM THIS YOU--?

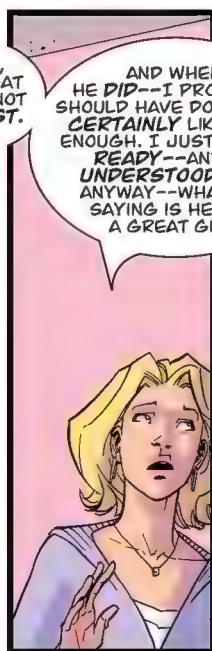
YEAH, WE STARTED DATING. THING IS, I WASN'T DISAPPOINTED, NOT ONE BIT.



HE WAS EVERYTHING I IMAGINED HE WAS AND MORE. HE WAS GREAT. HE WAS KIND, CONSIDERATE, SWEET-- EVERYTHING. HE WASN'T TRYING TO GET INTO MY PANTS.



OKAY, OKAY--AT LEAST NOT AT FIRST.

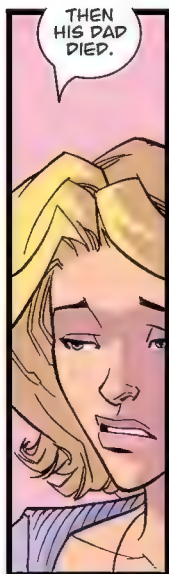


AND WHEN HE DID--I PROBABLY SHOULD HAVE DONE IT... I CERTAINLY LIKED HIM ENOUGH. I JUST WASN'T READY--AND HE UNDERSTOOD. BUT ANYWAY--WHAT I'M SAYING IS HE WAS A GREAT GUY.



AND THEN...?

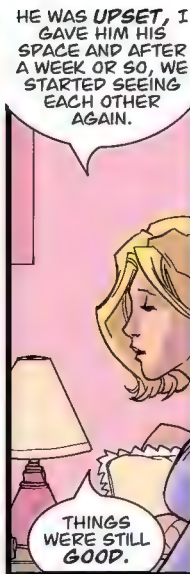




THEN HIS DAD DIED.

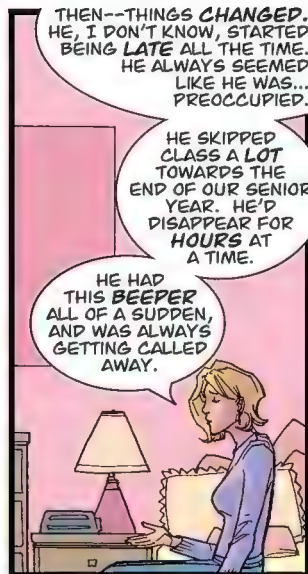


IT'S NOT WHAT YOU *THINK*-- I'M NOT COMPLAINING ABOUT *THAT*. THAT WOULD BE A HORRIBLE THING TO DO. IT HAPPENED A FEW MONTHS BACK. HE WAS OUT OF TOWN FOR A FEW WEEKS, AND THEN HE CAME BACK.



HE WAS *UPSET*, I GAVE HIM HIS SPACE AND AFTER A WEEK OR SO, WE STARTED SEEING EACH OTHER AGAIN.

THINGS WERE STILL *GOOD*.



THEN--THINGS *CHANGED*. HE, I DON'T KNOW, STARTED BEING *LATE* ALL THE TIME. HE ALWAYS SEEMED LIKE HE WAS... PREOCCUPIED.

HE SKIPPED CLASS A LOT TOWARDS THE END OF OUR SENIOR YEAR. HE'D DISAPPEAR FOR *HOURS* AT A TIME.

HE HAD THIS *BEEPER* ALL OF A SUDDEN, AND WAS ALWAYS GETTING CALLED AWAY.



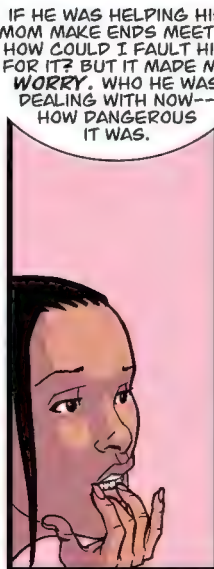
*DRUGS?*



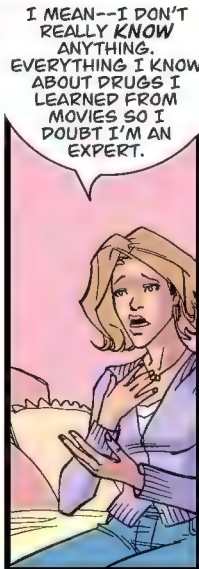
THAT'S WHAT I *THOUGHT* IT WAS. IT MADE *SENSE* WHEN I THOUGHT ABOUT IT.



HIS DAD *DIED*. IT WAS JUST HIM AND HIS MOM. I COULD SEE THEY NEEDED AN EXTRA INCOME. HIS DAD WAS AN AUTHOR, AND SALES PICKED UP WHEN HE DIED, BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH OF THAT MONEY HE GOT.



IF HE WAS HELPING HIS MOM MAKE ENDS MEET-- HOW COULD I FAULT HIM FOR IT? BUT IT MADE ME *WORRY*. WHO HE WAS DEALING WITH NOW-- HOW DANGEROUS IT WAS.



I MEAN--I DON'T REALLY *KNOW* ANYTHING. EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT *DRUGS* I LEARNED FROM MOVIES SO I DOUBT I'M AN EXPERT.

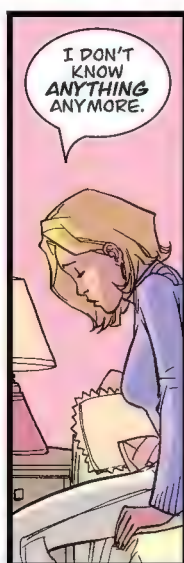


DON'T LOOK AT ME--THAT'S *RACIST*.

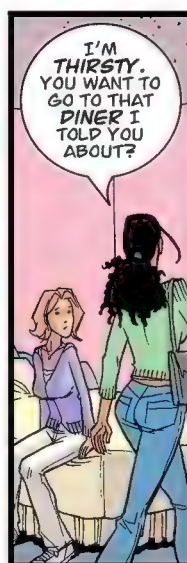
I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING *EVER*. MY PARENTS ARE *DOCTORS*. YOU DIDN'T CALL THE BLACK GIRL TO GET *DRUG* INFO DID YOU?



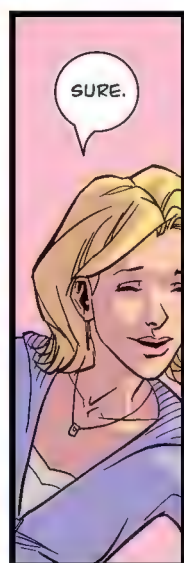
NO--*NO!* IT'S NOT THAT AT ALL! I DIDN'T CALL YOU TO TALK ABOUT *THAT*. I DON'T KNOW THAT HE WAS EVER SELLING *DRUGS*... I DON'T KNOW *WHAT'S* GOING ON.



I DON'T KNOW *ANYTHING* ANYMORE.

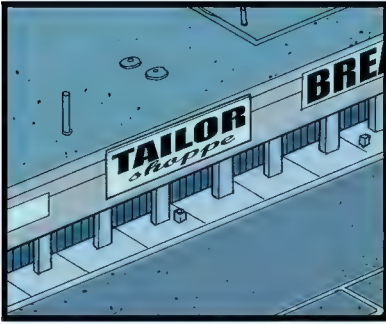


I'M *THIRSTY*. YOU WANT TO GO TO THAT *DINER* I TOLD YOU ABOUT?



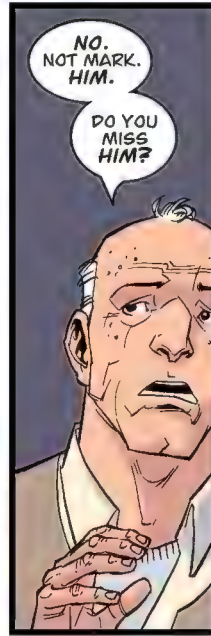
SURE.



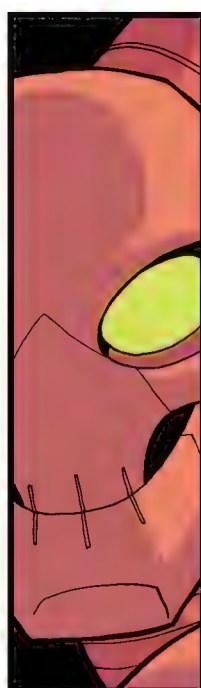
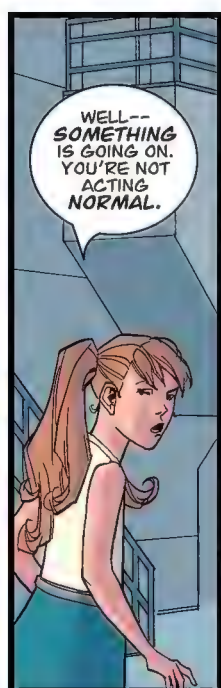
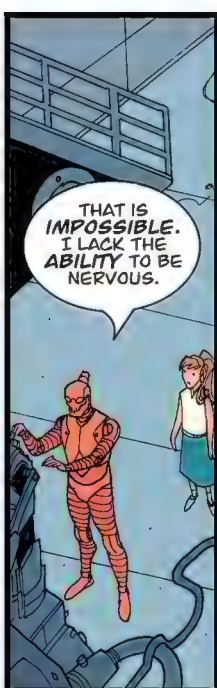
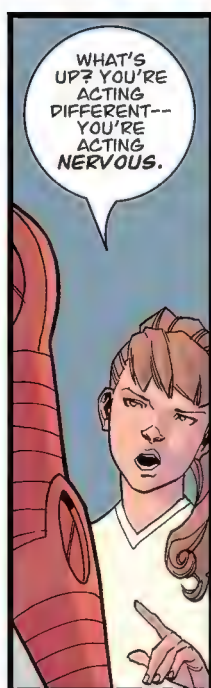
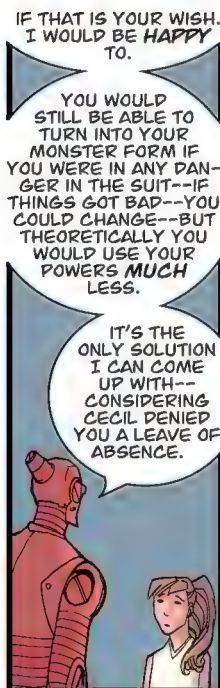
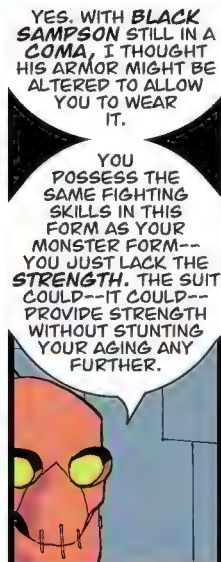
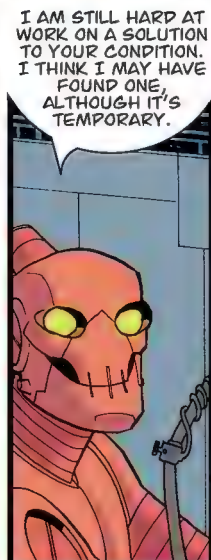
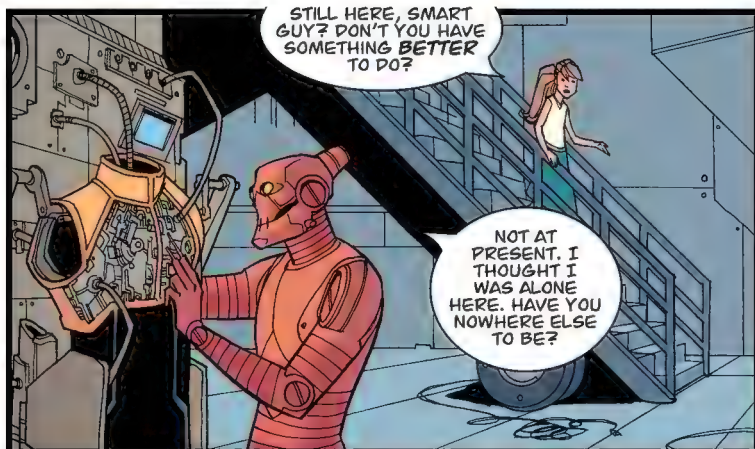
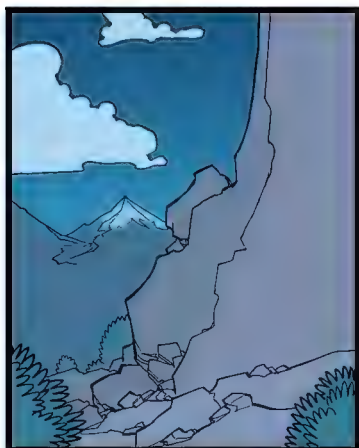


I DON'T CARE WHERE I WORK. I JUST--I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO. WITH MARK AWAY AT SCHOOL I'VE GOT NOTHING TO DO.

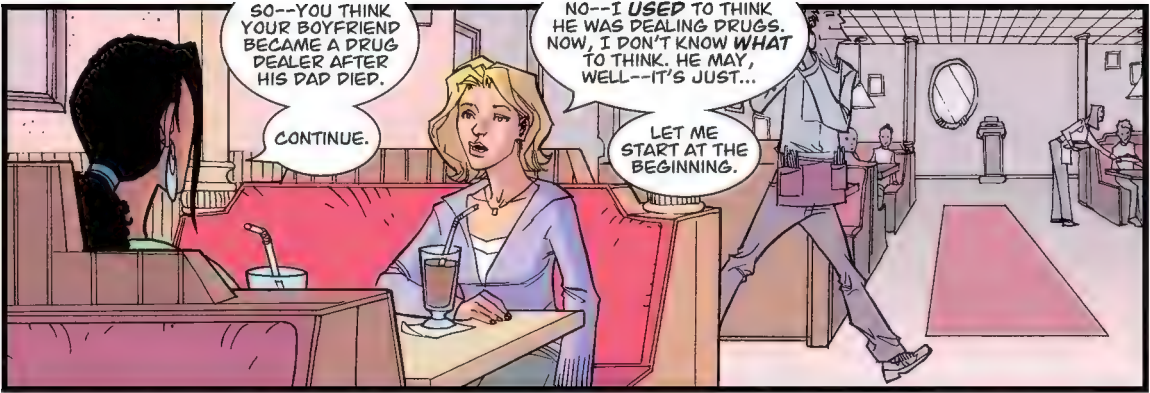
THE HOUSE IS EMPTY. I SWEAR IF I DIDN'T HAVE YOU AND CLAIRE TO TALK TO I'D GO CRAZY.











SO--YOU THINK YOUR BOYFRIEND BECAME A DRUG DEALER AFTER HIS DAD DIED.

CONTINUE.

NO--I USED TO THINK HE WAS DEALING DRUGS. NOW, I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK. HE MAY, WELL--IT'S JUST...

LET ME START AT THE BEGINNING.

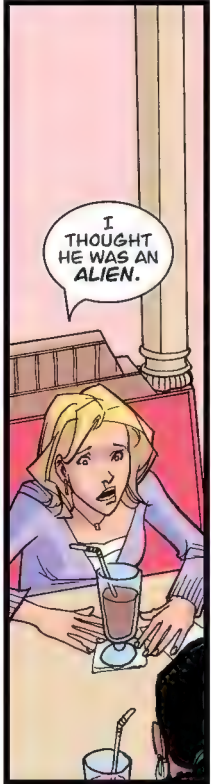
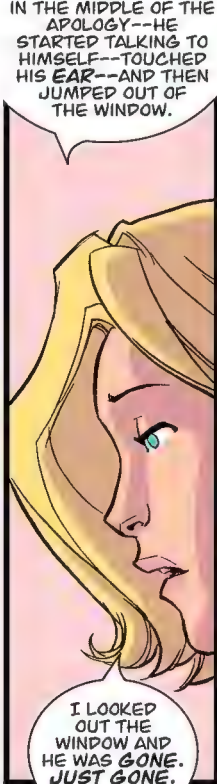
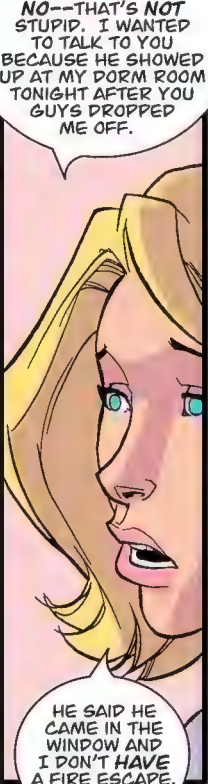
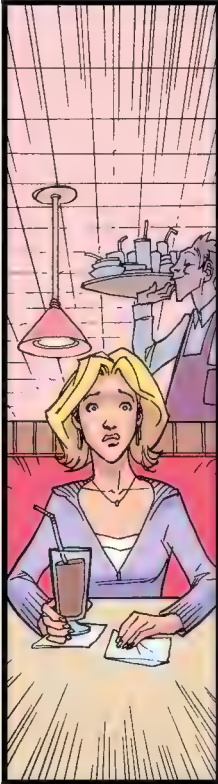
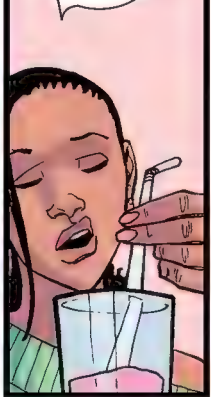
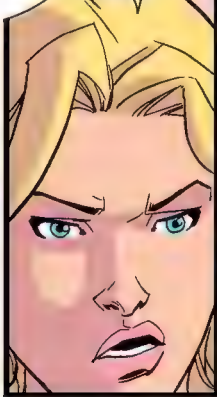
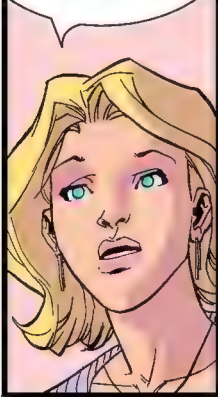
SEE, HIS SEMESTER STARTED BEFORE MINE. I VISITED HIM ON CAMPUS ON HIS FIRST DAY. THIS MONSTER ATTACKED THE STUDENTS.

IT WAS TEARING THE PLACE UP, PEOPLE WERE RUNNING AROUND IN EVERY DIRECTION TRYING TO GET AWAY. THEN, I TURN AROUND--AND MARK'S GONE.

THEN--AFTER THE SUPERHERO FLIES OFF WITH THE MONSTER AND EVERYONE IS SAFE... MARK COMES RUNNING UP--TELLING ME HOW WORRIED HE WAS.

THE JERK.

MAYBE HE'S THE SUPERHERO.



OKAY, YOU'RE RIGHT--IT'S STUPID. NEVER MIND.

CARRY ON.

NO--THAT'S NOT STUPID. I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU BECAUSE HE SHOWED UP AT MY DORM ROOM TONIGHT AFTER YOU GUYS DROPPED ME OFF.

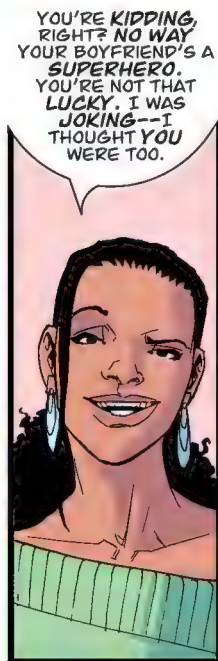
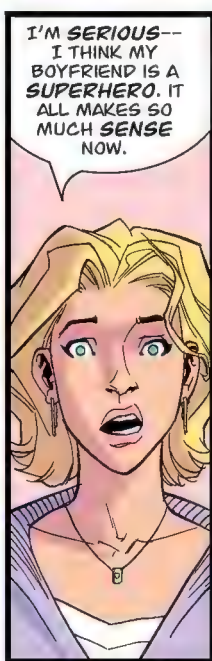
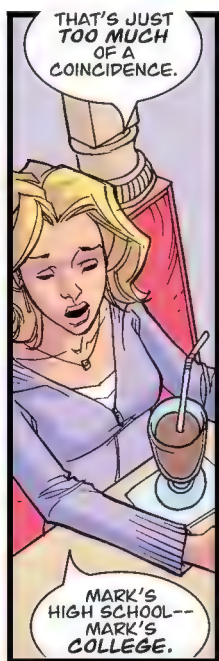
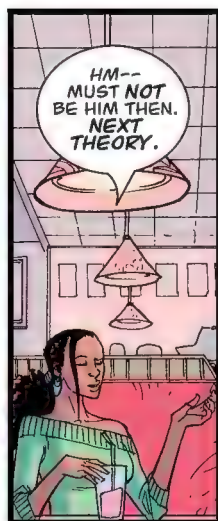
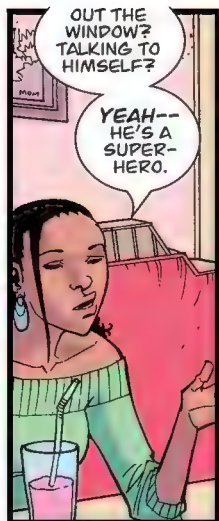
IN THE MIDDLE OF THE APOLOGY--HE STARTED TALKING TO HIMSELF--TOUCHED HIS EAR--AND THEN JUMPED OUT OF THE WINDOW.

I THOUGHT HE WAS AN ALIEN.

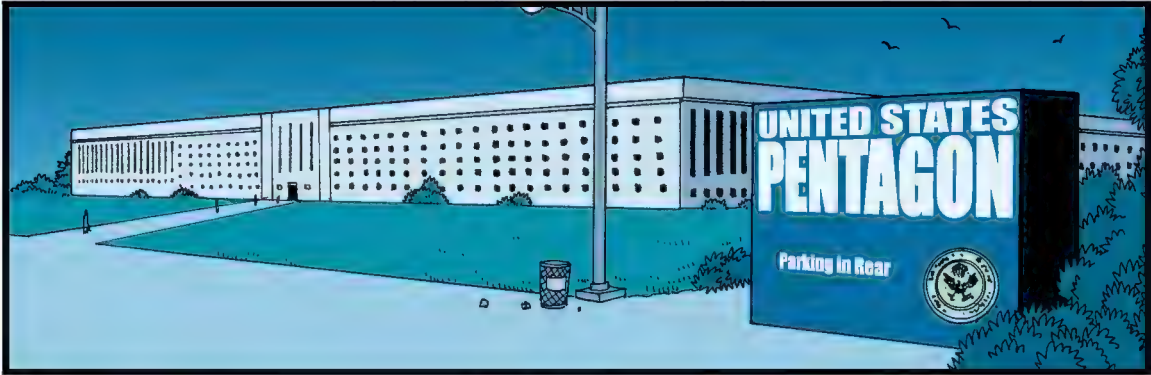
HE SAID HE CAME IN THE WINDOW AND I DON'T HAVE A FIRE ESCAPE.

I LOOKED OUT THE WINDOW AND HE WAS GONE. JUST GONE.





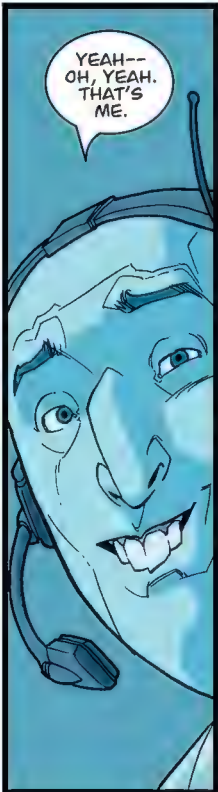




HOW GOES IT?

HOW GOES WHAT, SIR?

ARE YOU NOT THE ONE MONITORING THE MAULER TWINS?



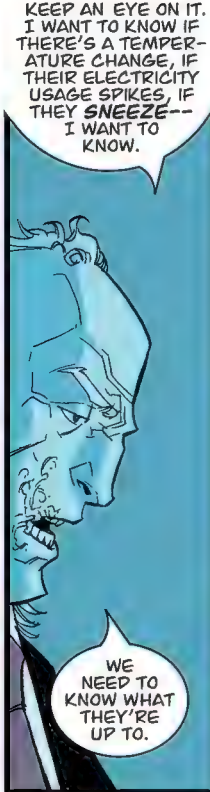
YEAH-- OH, YEAH. THAT'S ME.



THEN-- HOW GOES IT?



UM--NO CHANGE WHATSOEVER, SIR. THEY'VE LEFT AND COME BACK BUT NO ACTUAL ACTIVITY AS NEAR AS I CAN TELL... SIR.



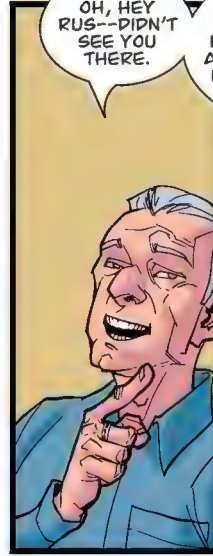
KEEP AN EYE ON IT. I WANT TO KNOW IF THERE'S A TEMPERATURE CHANGE, IF THEIR ELECTRICITY USAGE SPIKES, IF THEY SNEEZE-- I WANT TO KNOW.

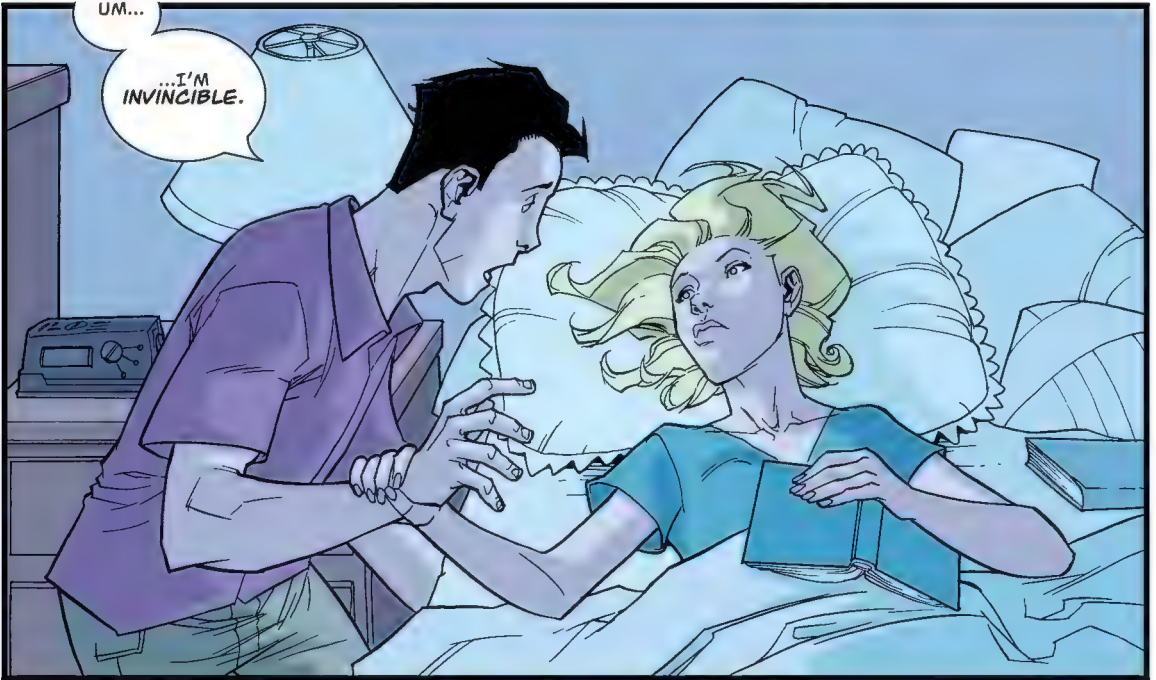
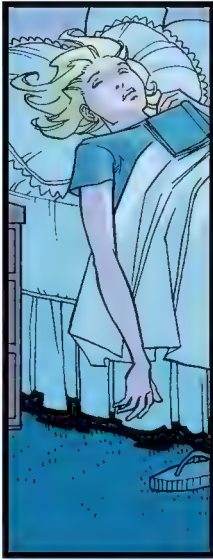
WE NEED TO KNOW WHAT THEY'RE UP TO.



YES SIR.

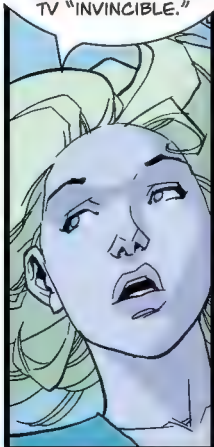








DON'T BE CUTE. I'M NOT MEANING, I-CAN'T-BE-HURT "INVINCIBLE." I MEAN I'M-THE-BLUE-AND-YELLOW-GUY-FROM-TV "INVINCIBLE."



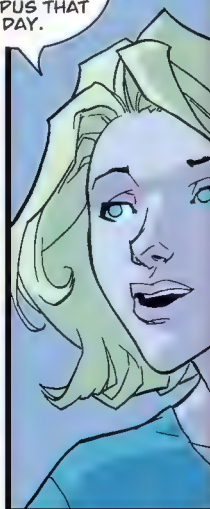
THE ONE WHO CAUGHT OUR PHYSICS TEACHER.



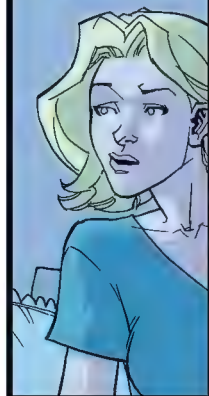
THE ONE WHOSE DAD KILLED ALL THOSE PEOPLE AND DISAPPEARED WHILE YOUR DAD DIED IN A CAR CRASH.



THE ONE WHO SAVED ME ON CAMPUS THAT DAY.



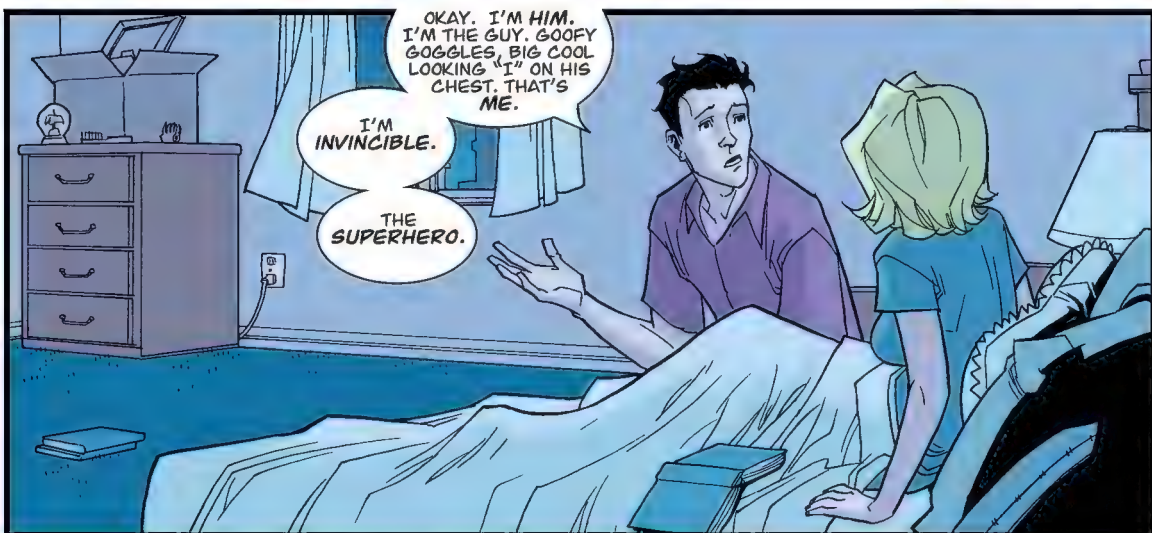
WELL?



OKAY. I'M HIM. I'M THE GUY. GOOFY GOGGLES, BIG COOL LOOKING "I" ON HIS CHEST. THAT'S ME.

I'M INVINCIBLE.

THE SUPERHERO.



SO YOU'RE NOT A DRUG DEALER.



WHAT?  
NO!



YOU'RE NOT SAYING THIS TO GET OFF THE HOOK FOR ABANDONING ME ON CAMPUS ARE YOU?



NO. I'M HIM. I SWEAR. THAT'S WHAT I WAS GOING TO TELL YOU EARLIER TONIGHT.



PROVE IT.

OKAY, ONE SECOND.



SEE? I'M INVINCIBLE.

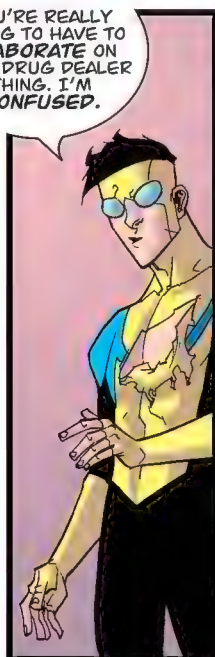
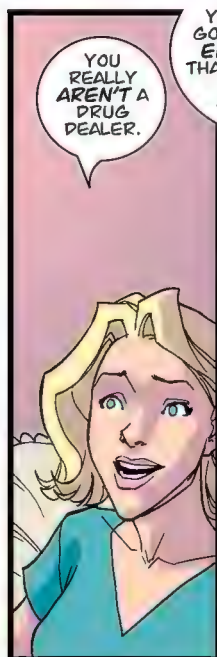
SORRY ABOUT THE RIP IN MY COSTUME. I WAS IN A FIGHT TONIGHT-- THAT'S WHAT I WAS CALLED AWAY FOR EARLIER.

THIS IS A NEW FABRIC-- ISN'T SUPPOSED TO RIP. I'M GOING TO HAVE TO GET MY MONEY BACK.

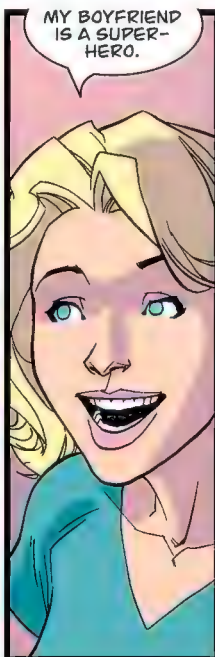


YOU REALLY AREN'T A DRUG DEALER.

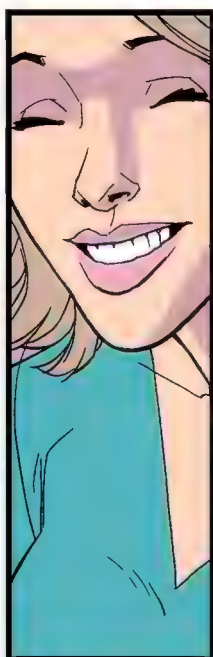
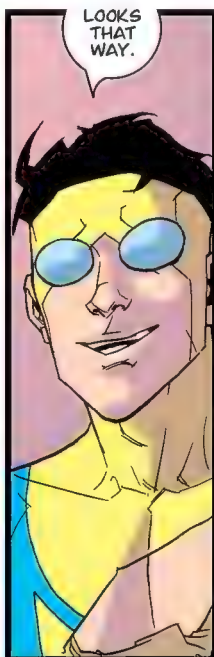
YOU'RE REALLY GOING TO HAVE TO ELABORATE ON THAT DRUG DEALER THING. I'M CONFUSED.



MY BOYFRIEND IS A SUPER-HERO.



LOOKS THAT WAY.







ALONE  
AT  
LAST.



I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW  
IT'S TAKEN MY **ENTIRE**  
COLLEGE CAREER TO GET  
TO THIS POINT. YOU CAN'T  
RUSH **GENIUS**, OF COURSE,  
BUT I WOULD HAVE  
**PREFERRED**  
TO ACHIEVE **MORE...** OF  
COURSE.

DID YOU  
KNOW THIS  
EXPERIMENT  
STARTED OUT  
SIMPLY AS A WAY  
TO REANIMATE  
DEAD TISSUE--TO  
CREATE **LIFE**  
WHERE THERE  
IS NONE?

I WANTED  
A NOBEL PRIZE--I  
WANTED TO REUNITE  
GRANDMOTHERS  
AND LOVED  
ONES.

I  
WANTED  
TO DO  
**GOOD**.

LITTLE DID  
I KNOW WHAT  
MY STUDIES  
WOULD LEAD ME  
TO. WHAT **DOORS**  
I WOULD BLOW  
OPEN WITH MY  
RESEARCH.

WHERE I SOUGHT  
TO CREATE **LIFE** I  
**SUCCEEDED** IN  
CREATING  
**DEATH**.

YOU KNOW,  
**NEWTON**  
DISCOVERED  
GRAVITY BY  
ACCIDENT.

WHAT I  
HAVE CREATED  
IS NOT MERELY  
A PROCESS WITH  
WHICH TO RE-  
ANIMATE LIFE--  
BUT IT IS THE  
ULTIMATE  
**KILLING**  
MACHINE.

A WEAPON  
OF WAR WITH  
**LIMITLESS**  
POTENTIAL.

NOW,  
**I, P.A.  
SINCLAIR**,  
HAVE BUT TO  
**PERFECT** MY  
DESIGN, STREAM-  
LINE IT, IMPROVE  
IT--**PERFECT**  
IT.

WHAT AN  
HONOR IT  
MUST BE FOR  
YOU--TO BE  
THE **FIRST**.





MY FIRST  
LIVE SUBJECT  
TO BE TURNED  
INTO A  
REANIMAN.

THE FIRST  
IN AN ARMY  
OF KILLING  
MACHINES.





# CHAPTER FOUR





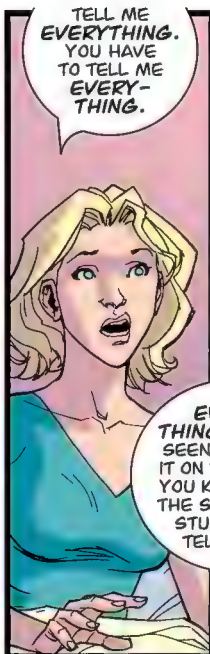


MY BOYFRIEND IS A **SUPERHERO**. I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW UNBELIEVABLY COOL THAT IS. I'M STILL IN **SHOCK**.



YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW **GOOD** IT FEELS TO FINALLY GET THAT OFF MY CHEST. I'M SO **HAPPY** YOU'RE TAKING THIS SO WELL.

I'VE BEEN PRETTY NERVOUS ABOUT THIS.

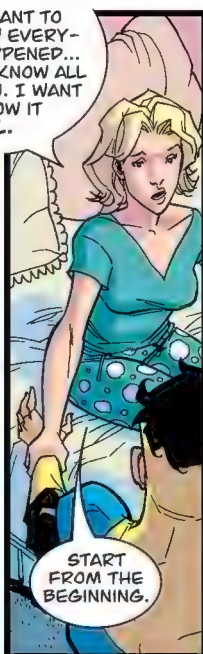


TELL ME **EVERYTHING**. YOU HAVE TO TELL ME **EVERYTHING**.

**EVERYTHING?** YOU'VE SEEN **MOST** OF IT ON THE NEWS. YOU KNOW ME-- THE **SUPERHERO** STUFF IS ALL **TELEVISED**.



NO--I WANT TO KNOW HOW **EVERYTHING** HAPPENED... I WANT TO KNOW ALL ABOUT YOU. I WANT TO KNOW IT **ALL**.



START FROM THE **BEGINNING**.



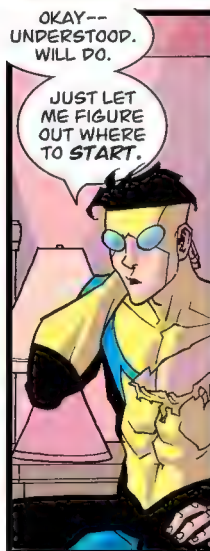
THE **BEGINNING?** IT'S KIND OF LATE ALREADY. ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT ME TO TELL YOU THE **WHOLE STORY** TONIGHT?

MARK, LISTEN TO ME. MY BOYFRIEND, **YOU**, JUST REVEALED TO ME HE'S A **SUPERHERO**. I DON'T THINK THERE'S ANY DANGER OF ME SLEEPING AT ALL TONIGHT. LET ALONE ANY TIME **SOON**.

TELL ME.

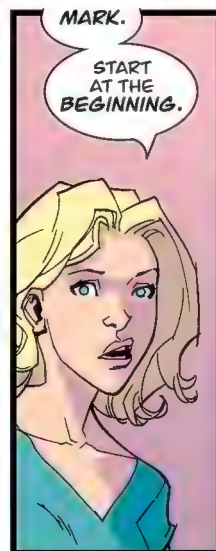
RIGHT NOW.

THE **WHOLE STORY**.



OKAY-- UNDERSTOOD. WILL DO.

JUST LET ME FIGURE OUT WHERE TO **START**.



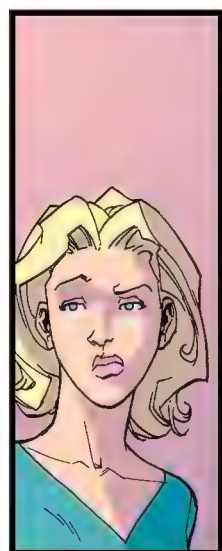
MARK.

START AT THE **BEGINNING**.



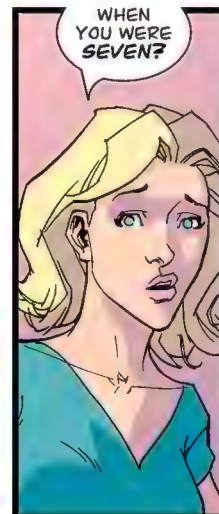
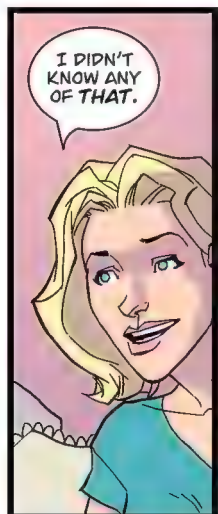
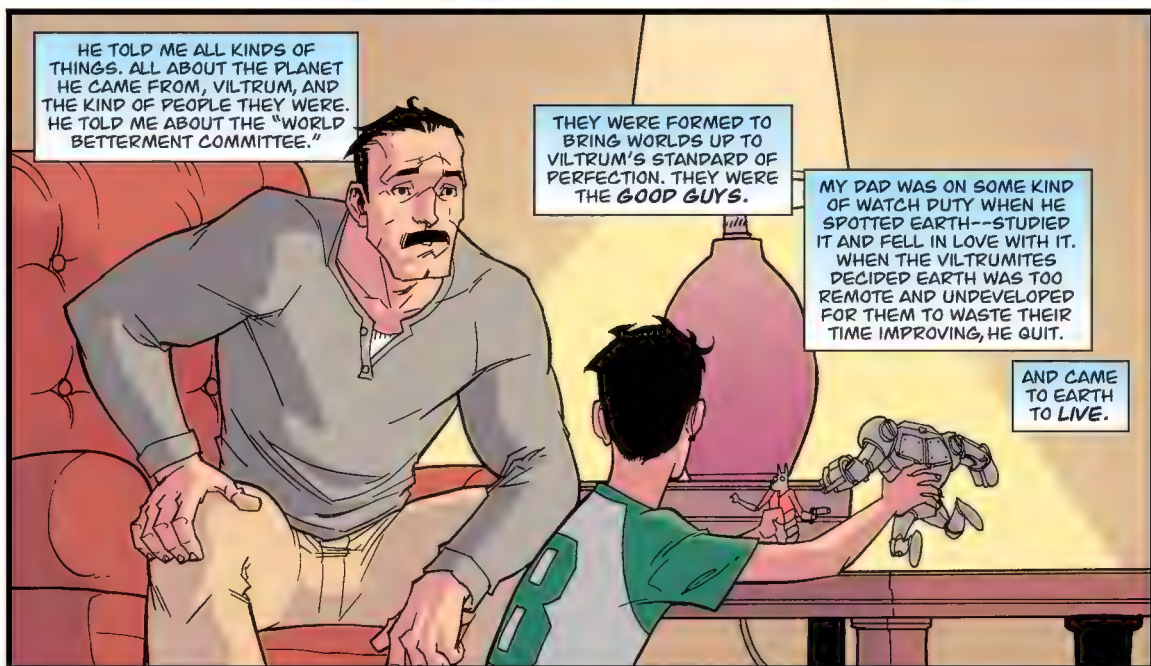
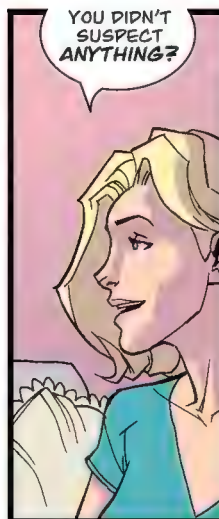
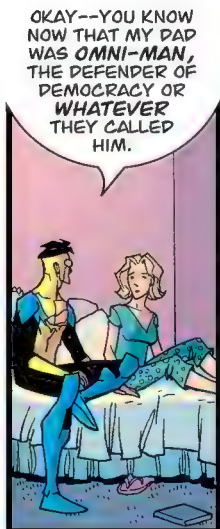
OKAY--LET ME REPHRASE.

I'M TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THE **BEGINNING** IS.



CUT ME SOME SLACK, OKAY? I'VE NEVER ACTUALLY SAT DOWN AND **TOLD** THIS STORY BEFORE.









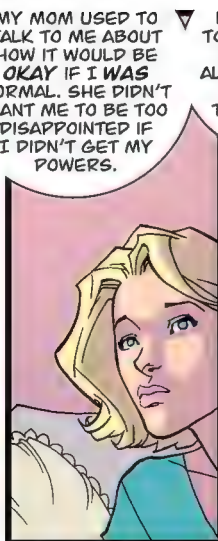
DID THEY?  
THE POWERS  
I MEAN. DID  
THEY KICK IN  
WHEN YOU  
WERE FOUR-  
TEEN?



NO--NOT UNTIL I WAS  
**SEVENTEEN**. IT WAS  
BARELY A YEAR AGO  
ACTUALLY. I,UM... I  
GUESS I'M A LATE  
**BLOOMER**.



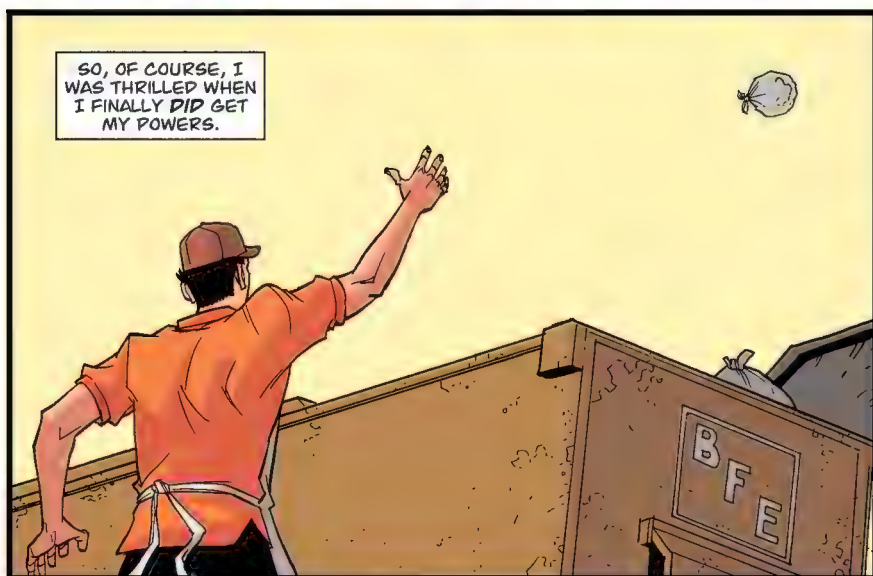
THAT'S THE THING,  
SEE... I GREW UP  
**EXPECTING** MY  
POWERS. EVERY  
DAY I WOKE UP  
AND **COULDN'T**  
FLY WAS A  
DISAPPOINT-  
MENT.



MY MOM USED TO  
TALK TO ME ABOUT  
HOW IT WOULD BE  
**OKAY** IF I WAS  
NORMAL. SHE DIDN'T  
WANT ME TO BE TOO  
DISAPPOINTED IF  
I DIDN'T GET MY  
POWERS.



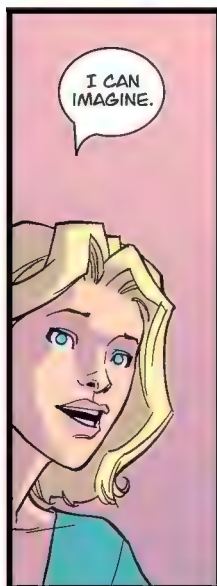
LIKE I SAID--IT  
TOOK **FOREVER**...  
I MEAN, I HAD  
ALMOST GIVEN UP,  
AND STOPPED  
THINKING ABOUT  
IT.



SO, OF COURSE, I  
WAS THRILLED WHEN  
I FINALLY DID GET  
MY POWERS.



IT'S  
ABOUT  
TIME.



I CAN  
IMAGINE.



THE WEEKS THAT  
FOLLOWED ARE A  
**BLUR**. TESTING MY  
STRENGTH, TRYING TO  
FLY, LEARNING TO DO  
THINGS REALLY  
FAST...IT WAS A  
LOT OF FUN.



I TELL YOU, SCHOOL  
CERTAINLY TOOK A  
BACK SEAT THOSE  
FIRST COUPLE WEEKS.  
IT WAS ALMOST  
IMPOSSIBLE TO JUST  
SIT IN A DESK KNOWING  
I COULD DO ALL  
THAT OTHER  
STUFF.



I EVEN PUT TOGETHER  
A LITTLE COSTUME, TO  
MASK MY IDENTITY  
WHILE I PRACTICED  
FLYING. RUBBER  
GLOVES, A BANDANA--  
SWEATPANTS. IT WAS  
RIDICULOUS.



I WISH I  
COULD HAVE  
SEEN IT.

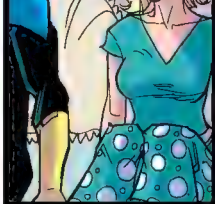


I CAN SHOW IT TO YOU. I STILL HAVE IT AT HOME... EXCEPT THE GLOVES. MY MOM USED THOSE ON DISHES...



ANYWAY--MY DAD SAW ME IN THAT GETUP *ONCE* AND TOOK ME TO GET MY FIRST COSTUME.

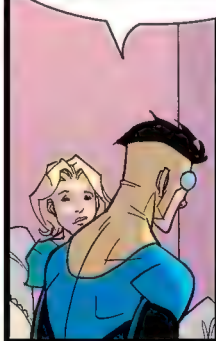
WHERE DO YOU GO FOR THAT?



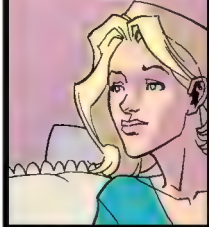
MY DAD KNEW A GUY--A TAILOR--SUPER SECRET STUFF. HE STILL MAKES ALL MY COSTUMES. HE'S A FRIEND OF THE FAMILY.



ONCE I HAD THE COSTUME, I DOVE HEAD FIRST INTO MY LIFE AS A SUPERHERO. I FOUGHT SOME GUYS--MET SOME OTHER HEROES--ALL IN THE SPAN OF A MONTH.



AFTER A WHILE--I EVEN GOT TO GO ON A FEW MISSIONS WITH MY DAD.



SEEING HIM IN ACTION WAS--I WAS IN AWE. I'D SEEN HIM ON THE NEWS MILLIONS OF TIMES WHILE GROWING UP. YOU'D THINK I WOULD BE USED TO IT.

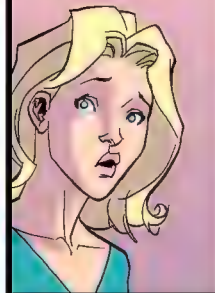
BEING THERE, SEEING HIM IN PERSON--WATCHING HIM UP CLOSE--IT WAS MESMERIZING. HE WAS MOVING SO FAST HE WOULD JUST SEEM TO *APPEAR* WHERE HE WAS NEEDED.



HE WAS A FIGHTING MACHINE--I DIDN'T SEE HIM HESITATE FOR EVEN A SECOND. HE TRULY WAS THE WORLD'S GREATEST HERO.

I COULDN'T EVEN KEEP UP WITH HIM WHEN WE FLEW TOGETHER.

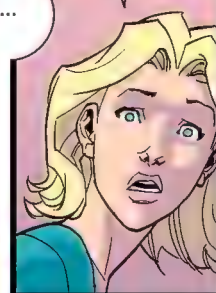
MARK? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?



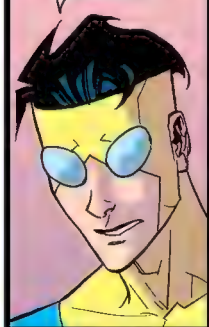
OH, SORRY. I WAS JUST--I WAS THINKING ABOUT THE WAY THINGS WERE. BEFORE HE--



ARE YOU OKAY?



YEAH, OF COURSE. SORRY I--WHERE WAS I?





YOU HAD JUST BECOME A SUPER-HERO.

OH, YEAH. AROUND THAT SAME TIME, STUDENTS AT OUR HIGH SCHOOL, YOU'LL REMEMBER, WERE TURNING UP ALL OVER TOWN, WITH BOMBS INSIDE THEM-- BLOWING STUFF UP.

I REMEMBER. TWIN PINES MALL WAS CLOSED FOR LIKE--FOUR MONTHS. IT WAS HORRIBLE.

THE WHOLE THING--NOT JUST THE MALL BEING CLOSED--OF COURSE.

OF COURSE. ANYWAY-- I FIRST DISCOVERED THEY WERE STUDENTS FROM OUR SCHOOL BECAUSE MY DAD AND I ENCOUNTERED ONE OF THEM IN LAKESIDE MALL.

THE GUY MUST HAVE HATED MALLS. ANYWAY, WE GOT TO HIM JUST BEFORE HE WENT OFF--

I RECOGNIZED HIM FROM SCHOOL. DAD THREW HIM INTO THE SKY AND SAVED THE MALL.

YOU WERE ON TV, THEN. THAT WAS WHEN YOU CALLED OMNI-MAN "DAD" AND EVERYONE FOUND OUT YOU WERE HIS SON.

YEAH--THAT'S RIGHT. IT WAS ABOUT A WEEK LATER THAT ATOM EVE AND I ACTUALLY STOPPED THE GUY BEHIND IT ALL, WHO TURNED OUT TO BE MR. HILES, OUR PHYSICS TEACHER.

HE WAS A REAL NUT JOB AND HAD SOMEHOW EVEN TURNED HIMSELF INTO A BOMB. HE WAS GOING TO KILL BOTH OF US IN HIS FINAL ACT BUT I FLEW HIM TO ANTARCTICA SO THE EXPLOSION WOULDN'T HURT ANYBODY.

EVE HELPED ME OUT A LOT IN THOSE DAYS ACTUALLY. SHE WAS KINDA LIKE MY SUPERHERO PARTNER.

ATOM EVE? SHE'S NOT--I MEAN--THAT'S NOT OUR EVE IS IT?

YEAH--IT KINDA IS. JEEZ, DON'T SAY ANYTHING, THOUGH. SHE'D BE REALLY PISSED IF SHE FOUND OUT I TOLD YOU.

YOU CAN TRUST ME, MARK. I PROMISE. IF NOTHING ELSE COMES OF THIS TALK--I REALLY WANT TO MAKE SURE YOU AT LEAST KNOW THAT.

I TRUST YOU, AMBER. I WOULDN'T BE TELLING YOU ALL THIS IF I DIDN'T. IT'S JUST SOMETHING YOU GOTTA SAY, Y'KNOW.

SO YEAH, HILES WAS MY FIRST BIG SUPERVILLAIN. IF YOU CAN EVEN CALL HIM THAT.



I FACED A FEW GOOD ONES: THE MAULER TWINS, TITAN, DOC SEISMIC, THE LIZARD LEAGUE, AND THIS ONE DUPE CALLED "THE ELEPHANT" BUT HE WAS REALLY JUST A LAME RIP-OFF OF "THE RHINO."

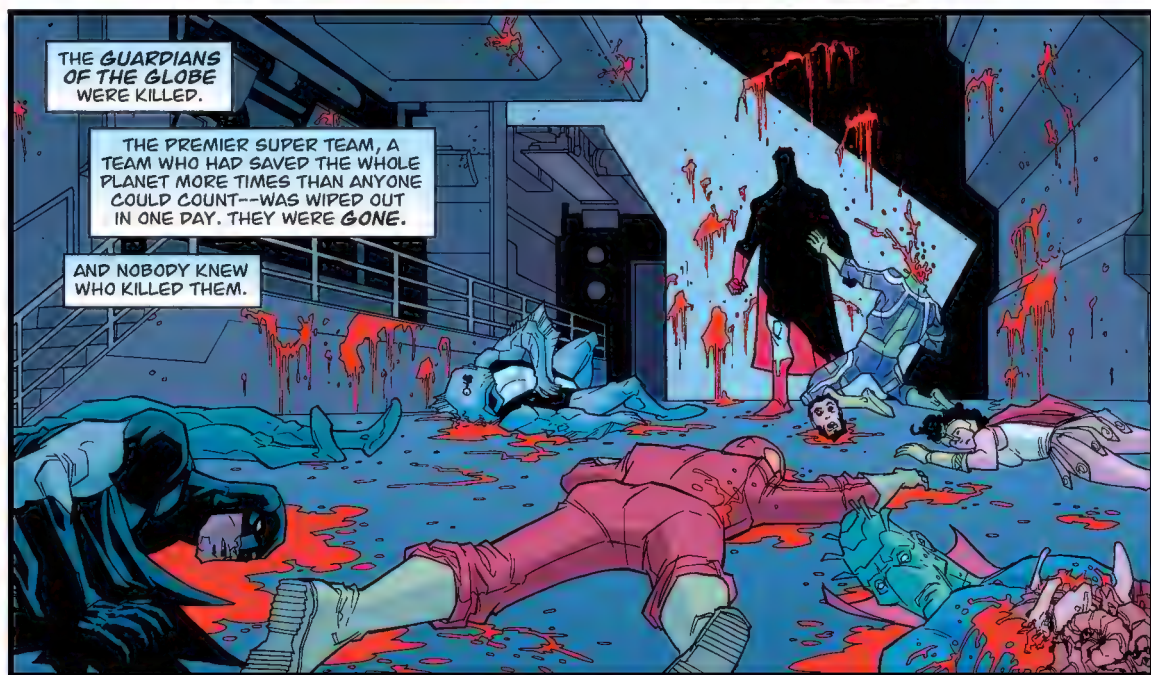
THAT GUY KINDA SUCKED.

I'VE NEVER HEARD OF ANY OF THOSE GUYS.

YEAH, WELL--THAT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT IN "THE BUSINESS." OTHERWISE YOU'D TOTALLY KNOW WHO THEY WERE.

NO. I WATCH THE NEWS. THERE'S A NEW SUPERVILLAIN ON THERE EVERY WEEK. THE CHRONOPHILE, MEGA-BRAIN, SEBASTIAN KAHN... I SEE VILLAINS ON TV-- BUT NONE OF THE GUYS YOU MENTIONED.

YEAH--UH--ANYWAY, THINGS WENT ALONG PRETTY SMOOTHLY FOR A LONG TIME. THEN--SHORTLY BEFORE YOU AND I GOT TOGETHER EVERYTHING CHANGED.



NOBODY BUT YOU...

RIGHT?

NO! I HAD NO IDEA WHO HAD DONE IT.

OH--HOW LONG WAS IT BEFORE YOU FOUND OUT?

I DON'T KNOW... A MONTH.

HOW DID YOU FIND OUT?





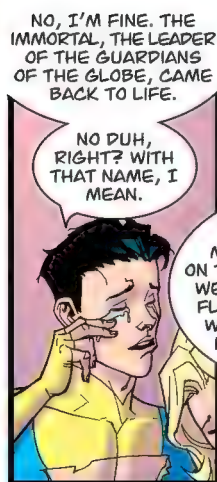
I DON'T--I'VE NEVER TALKED ABOUT THIS BEFORE... EVER.



I--

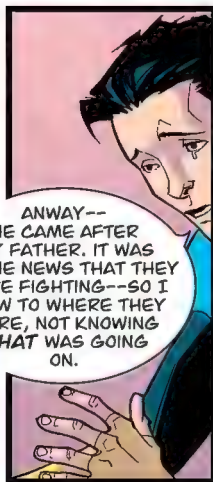


OH, MARK--I'M SO SORRY. YOU CAN STOP IF YOU WANT.



NO, I'M FINE. THE IMMORTAL, THE LEADER OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE, CAME BACK TO LIFE.

NO DUH, RIGHT? WITH THAT NAME, I MEAN.



ANYWAY-- HE CAME AFTER MY FATHER. IT WAS ON THE NEWS THAT THEY WERE FIGHTING--SO I FLEW TO WHERE THEY WERE, NOT KNOWING WHAT WAS GOING ON.



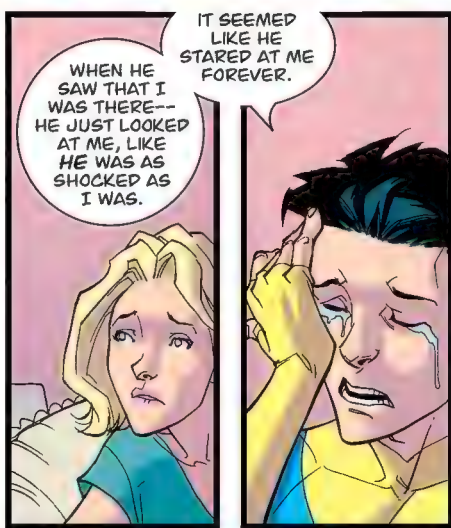
I HAD NO CLUE WHAT I WAS IN FOR. I COULDN'T FIGURE OUT WHY THE IMMORTAL WOULD BE FIGHTING MY DAD.

WHEN I ARRIVED, AND SAW MY FATHER PUNCHING A HOLE THROUGH THE IMMORTAL I WAS ONLY MORE CONFUSED.

I WAS IN SHOCK--IT WAS LIKE I LEFT MY BODY. I COULDN'T BELIEVE WHAT I WAS SEEING WAS REAL.

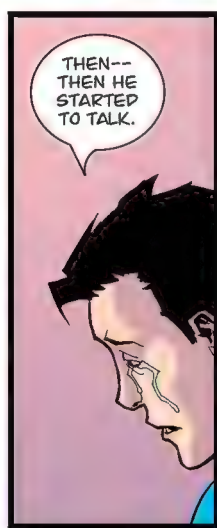
HE DIDN'T KNOW I WAS THERE YET--I HEARD THEM TALKING WHILE THEY FOUGHT.

THAT'S WHEN I FOUND OUT THAT MY FATHER--MY FATHER KILLED THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.



WHEN HE SAW THAT I WAS THERE-- HE JUST LOOKED AT ME, LIKE HE WAS AS SHOCKED AS I WAS.

IT SEEMED LIKE HE STARED AT ME FOREVER.

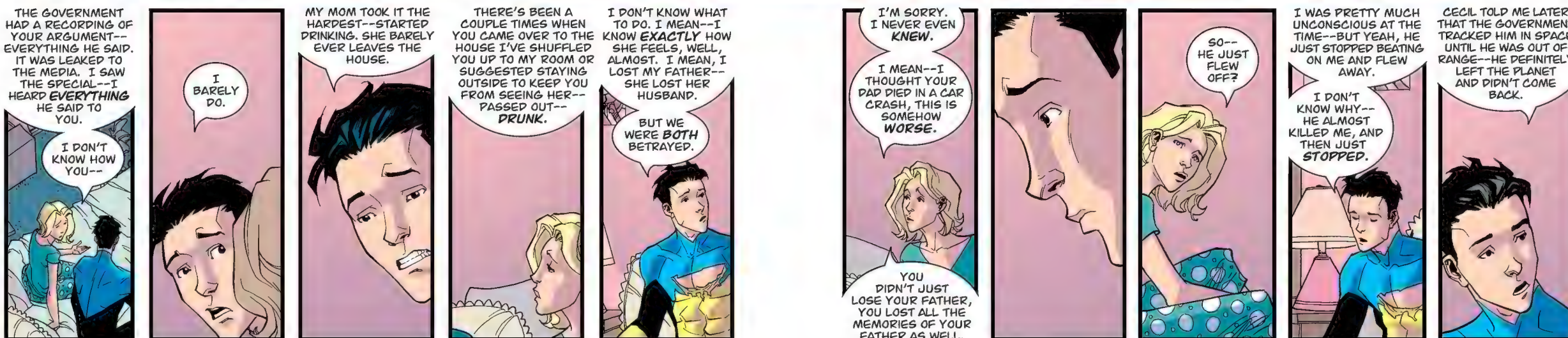
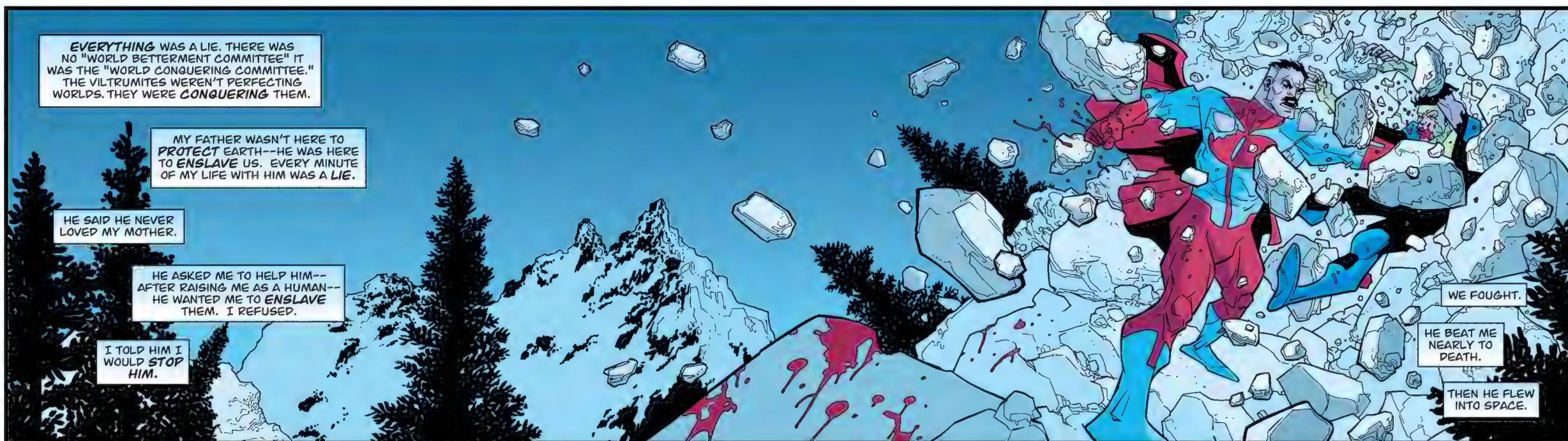
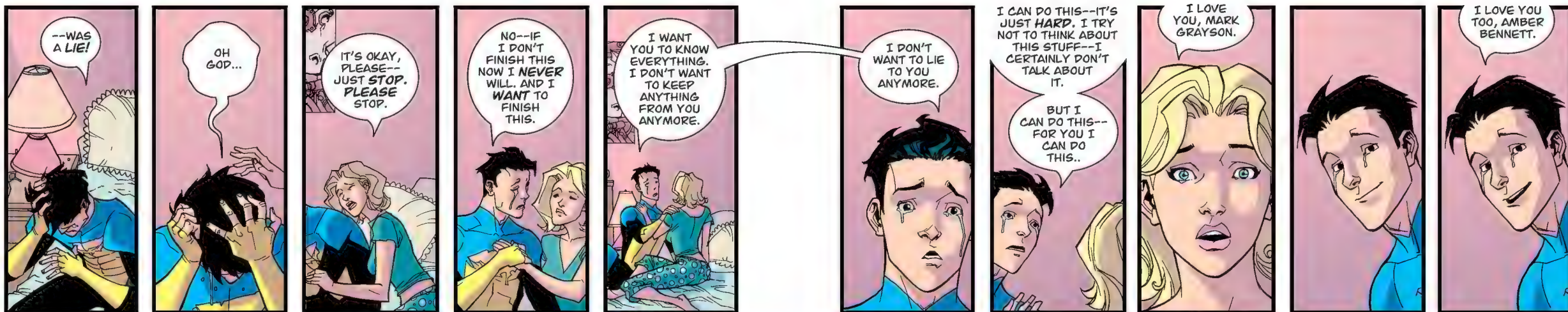


THEN-- THEN HE STARTED TO TALK.

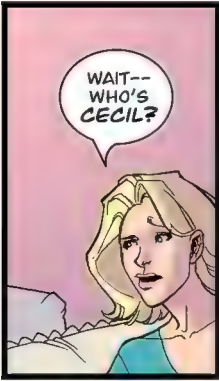
HE TOLD ME--HE TOLD ME THAT EVERYTHING HE HAD EVER TOLD ME ABOUT HIMSELF--



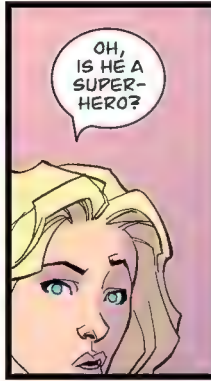
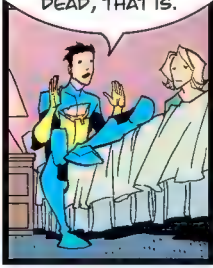








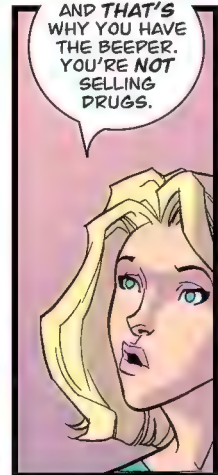
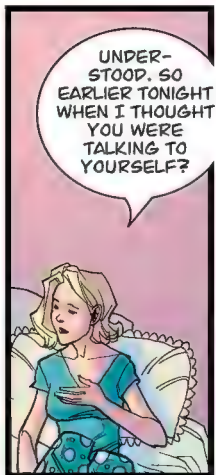
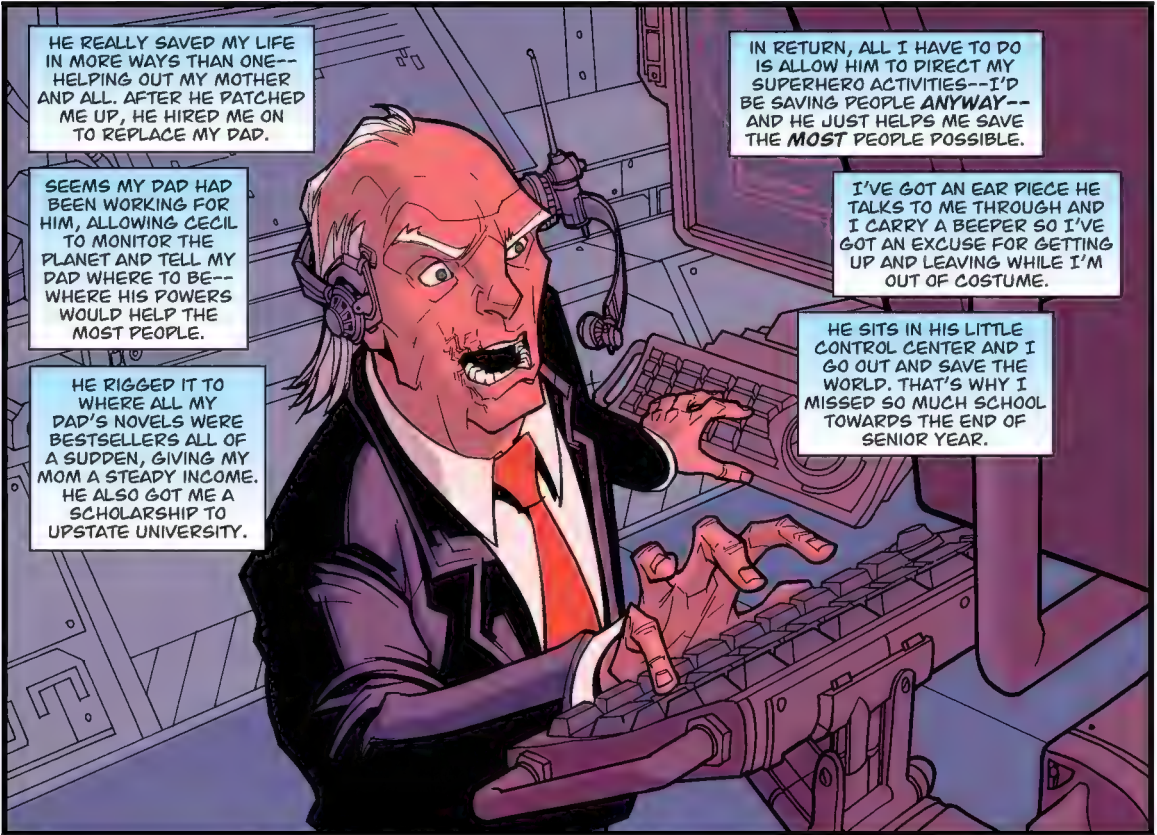
OH, SORRY. I GUESS  
I GOT A LITTLE AHEAD  
OF MYSELF. CECIL  
WAS THE GUY THAT  
SAVED ME--AFTER MY  
DAD LEFT ME FOR  
DEAD, THAT IS.



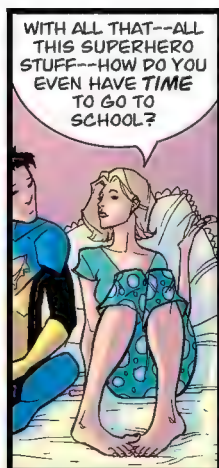
CALLER CECIL?  
OH, NO--HE'S A  
SPOOKY GOVERN-  
MENT GUY--REALLY  
NICE THOUGH. I  
LIKE HIM.



HE'S GOT  
SOME KIND OF  
SUPER SECRET  
UNDERGROUND BASE  
BELOW THE PENTAGON.  
THEY HAD THE ONLY  
HOSPITAL QUALIFIED  
TO TREAT MY  
INJURIES.







WITH ALL THAT--ALL THIS SUPERHERO STUFF--HOW DO YOU EVEN HAVE TIME TO GO TO SCHOOL?



IT'S NOT THAT BAD-- THERE ARE ENTIRE WEEKS THAT GO BY WITHOUT ME GETTING CALLED TO DO ANYTHING.

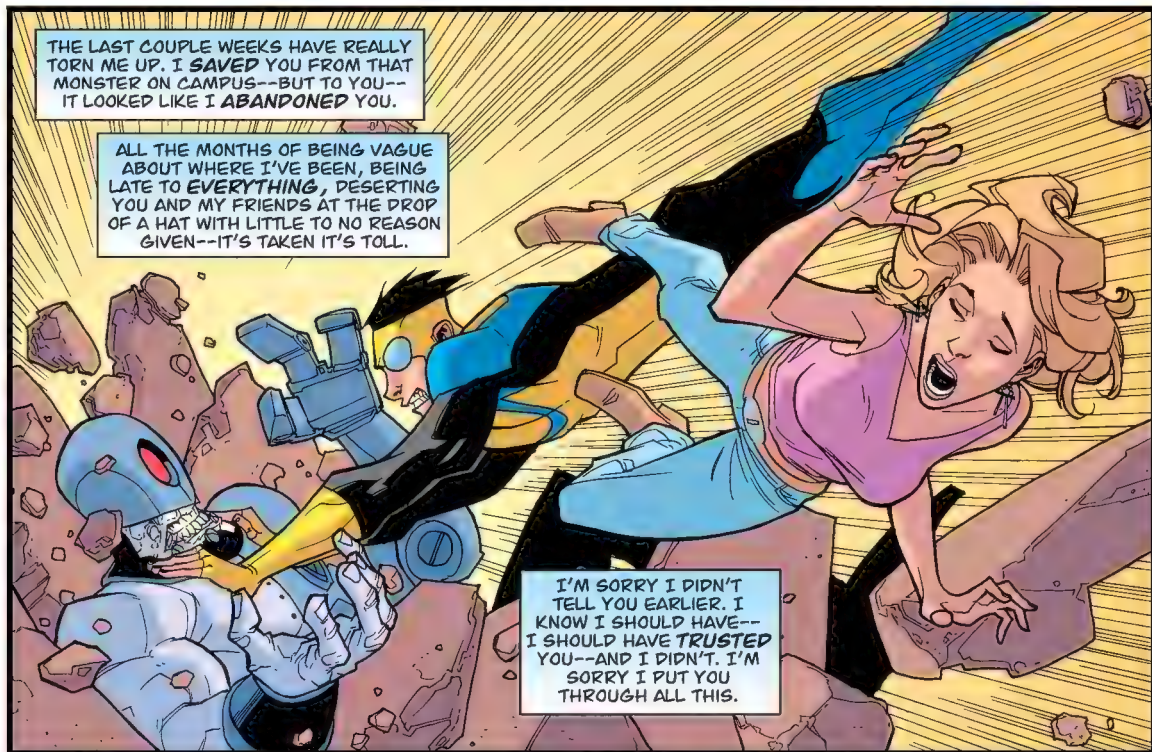


BUT THERE ARE *SOME* WEEKS... WHERE I'M WORKING NON-STOP. MAN, THE WEEK I WENT TO MARS ALMOST KILLED ME.



YOU WENT TO MARS? WHEN?

IT WAS LIKE, A WEEK BEFORE I STARTED COLLEGE. NOT LONG AGO. I'LL TELL YOU ALL ABOUT IT LATER, JUST--I WANTED TO APOLOGIZE TO YOU BEFORE I FINISH.



THE LAST COUPLE WEEKS HAVE REALLY TORN ME UP. I **SAVED** YOU FROM THAT MONSTER ON CAMPUS--BUT TO YOU--IT LOOKED LIKE I **ABANDONED** YOU.

ALL THE MONTHS OF BEING VAGUE ABOUT WHERE I'VE BEEN, BEING LATE TO **EVERYTHING**, DESERTING YOU AND MY FRIENDS AT THE DROP OF A HAT WITH LITTLE TO NO REASON GIVEN--IT'S TAKEN ITS TOLL.

I'M SORRY I DIDN'T TELL YOU EARLIER. I KNOW I SHOULD HAVE-- I SHOULD HAVE **TRUSTED** YOU--AND I DIDN'T. I'M SORRY I PUT YOU THROUGH ALL THIS.



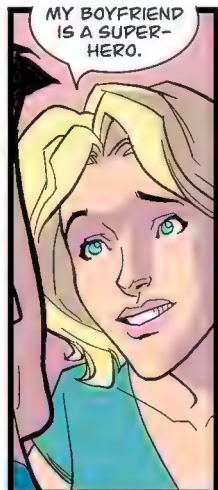
DON'T WORRY. IT'S ALL BETTER NOW.



YEAH-- IT REALLY IS.



SO THAT'S ME-- SUPERHERO MARK. THAT'S EVERYTHING.

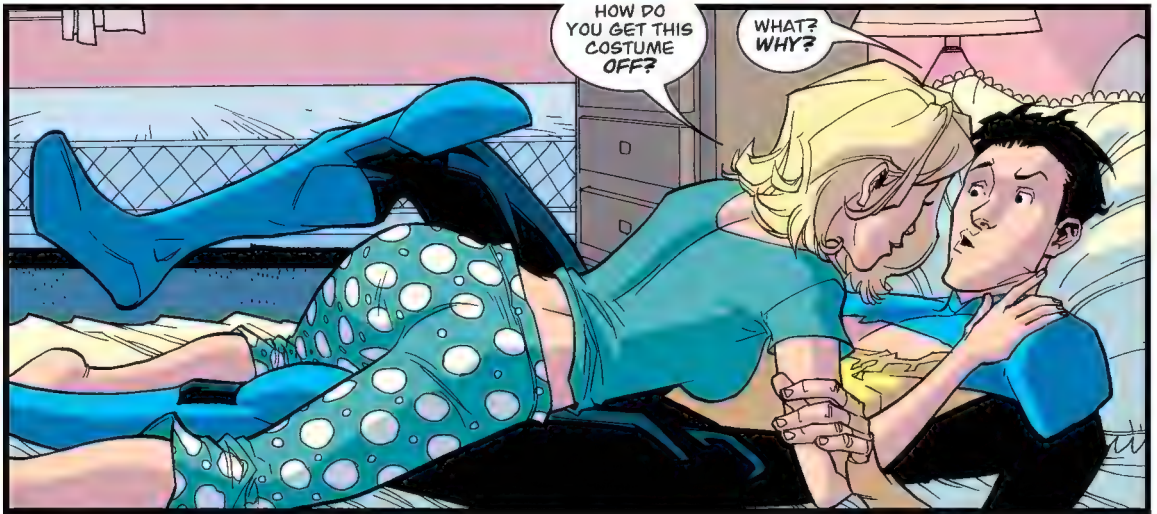
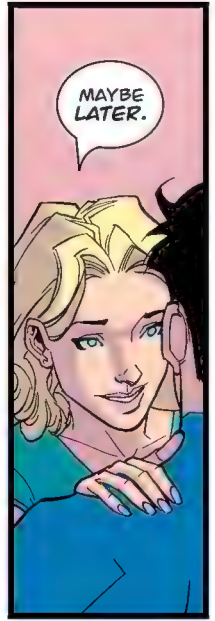
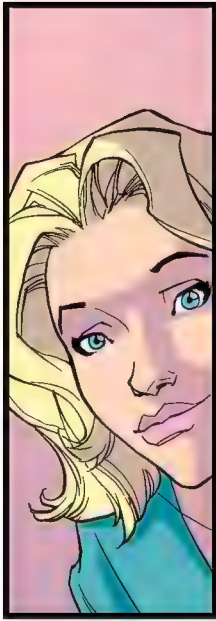


MY BOYFRIEND IS A SUPERHERO.



YOUR BOYFRIEND IS A SUPERHERO.





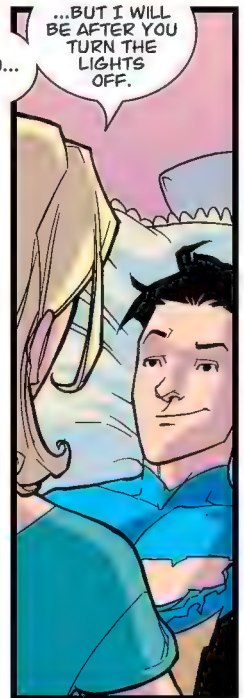
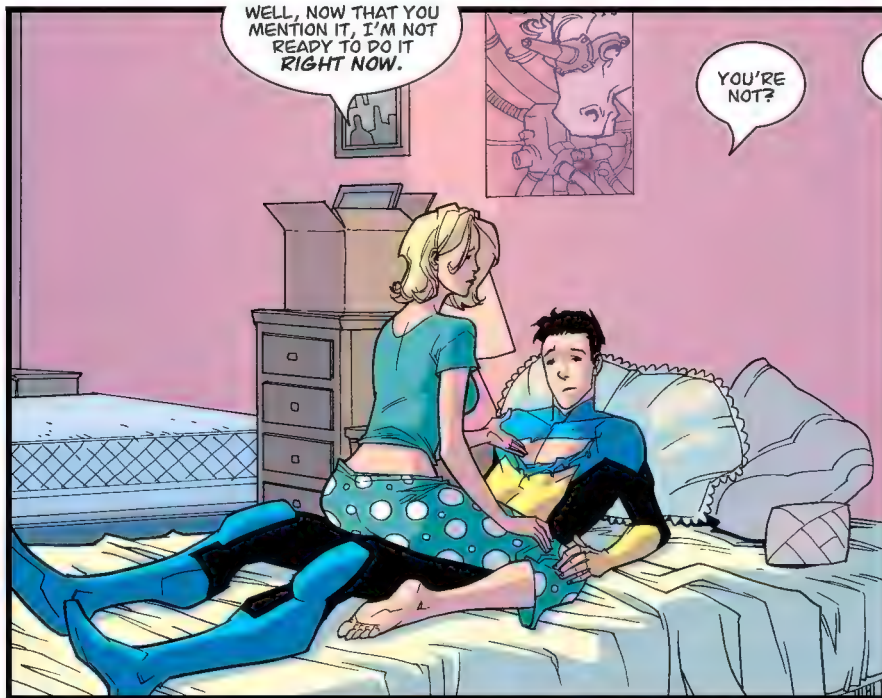




# CHAPTER FIVE







**KLICK.**

HOW'D YOU DO THAT?

SUPER-POWERS, BABY.



BORN OF A RACE ENDANGERED, CAST OUT OF THEIR HOMEWORLD LIKE A BAND OF GYPSIES, TESTED AND EXPERIMENTED ON TO INCREASE HIS STRENGTH AND SPEED, UNTIL HE EMERGED A GUARDIAN OF THE SPACEWAYS. IMAGE COMICS PRESENTS: ALLEN THE ALIEN IN:

# THIS MESSAGE, THIS MACHINATION!

AND SO, DEAR READER, WE TURN OUR ATTENTIONS ELSEWHERE TO GIVE YOUNG MARK GRAYSON AND AMBER BENNETT SOME PRIVACY.

THIS IS A FAMILY TITLE AFTER ALL.

YES, WE TURN TO EVENTS TRANSPIRING ELSEWHERE, TO BE MORE SPECIFIC, DEEP SPACE. TO BE STILL MORE SPECIFIC, DEEP SPACE A FEW MONTHS AGO. TO BE EVEN STILL MORE SPECIFIC, DEEP SPACE A FEW MONTHS AGO, ON A DIRECT PATH FROM EARTH TO THE HEART OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS!

ON THIS PATH WE FIND ALLEN THE ALIEN, DILIGENT IN HIS MISSION TO DELIVER NEWS TO HIS SUPERIORS. DILIGENT IN BRINGING THEM THE MESSAGE OF HIS DEALINGS ON EARTH!

A MESSAGE THAT GOES SOMETHING LIKE THIS: THERE IS A VILTRUMITE ON EARTH WITH NO LOYALTIES TO THE VILTRUM EMPIRE. BEYOND THAT THERE IS ANOTHER VILTRUMITE WHO HAS ABANDONED HIS POST.\*

THESE ACTIONS ARE UNHEARD OF--AND NEWS OF THIS MAY WELL BRING THE COALITION THE HOPE IT NEEDS IN THESE DIRE TIMES.

\*SEE ISSUE 13, TRUE BELIEVERS.

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LETTERER

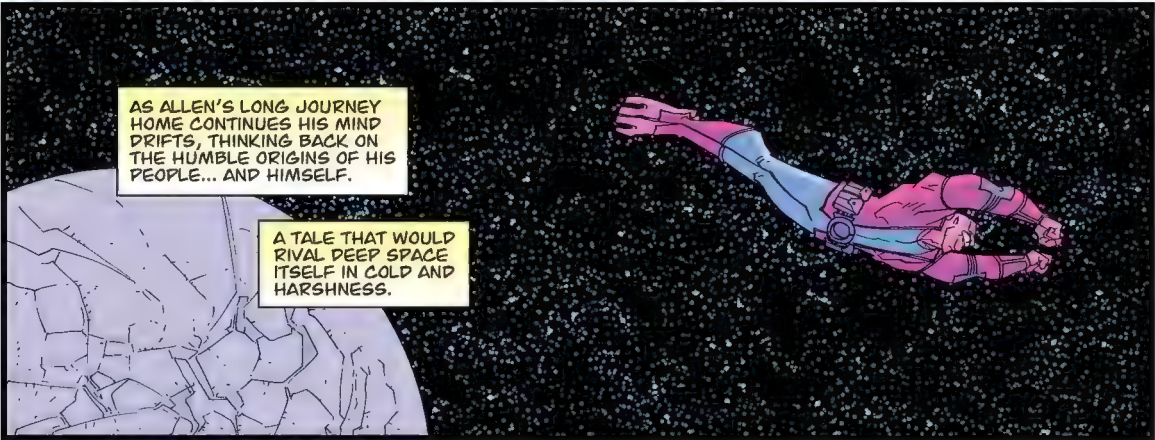
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AS ALLEN'S LONG JOURNEY HOME CONTINUES HIS MIND DRIFTS, THINKING BACK ON THE HUMBLE ORIGINS OF HIS PEOPLE... AND HIMSELF.

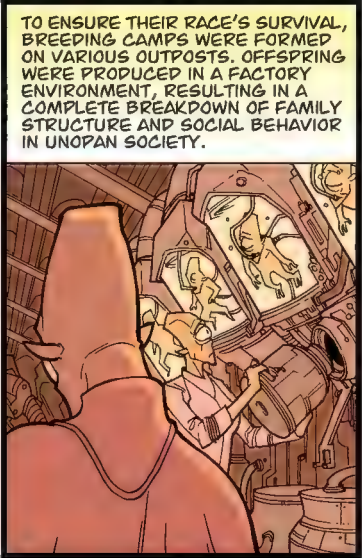
A TALE THAT WOULD RIVAL DEEP SPACE ITSELF IN COLD AND HARSHNESS.



LIFE ON UNOPA WAS ENDED WHEN THE VILTRUMITES INVADIED. LIKE A PLAGUE OF UNEQUALLED POTENCY, THE VILTRUMITES SWEEP ACROSS THE PLANET--CONQUERING IT IN A MATTER OF DAYS.



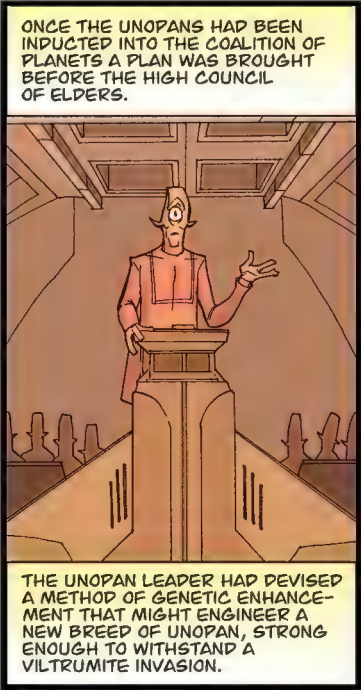
EVER RESOURCEFUL--THE UNOPANS WERE ABLE TO ESCAPE THEIR PLANET, ABANDONING IT FOR THE STARS--AND THE PROMISE OF A NEW LIFE.



TO ENSURE THEIR RACE'S SURVIVAL, BREEDING CAMPS WERE FORMED ON VARIOUS OUTPOSTS. OFFSPRING WERE PRODUCED IN A FACTORY ENVIRONMENT, RESULTING IN A COMPLETE BREAKDOWN OF FAMILY STRUCTURE AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR IN UNOPAN SOCIETY.

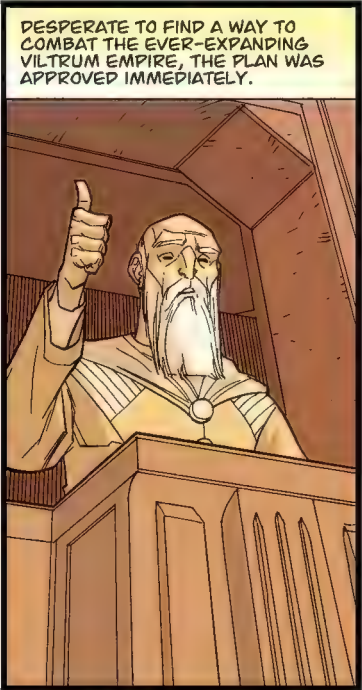


IMPRESSED WITH THE UNOPANS ABILITY TO ESCAPE AND OVERCOME THE HARDSHIPS OF THE VILTRUMITE INVASION--THE **COALITION OF PLANETS** INVITED THEM TO JOIN THEIR RANKS.



ONCE THE UNOPANS HAD BEEN INDUCTED INTO THE COALITION OF PLANETS A PLAN WAS BROUGHT BEFORE THE HIGH COUNCIL OF ELDERS.

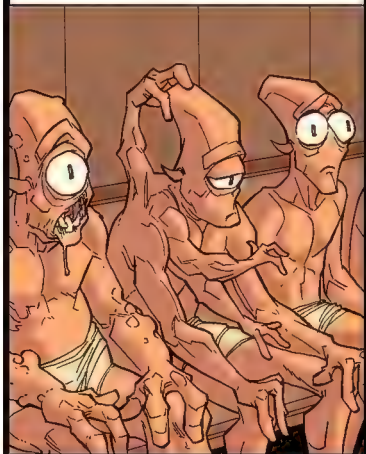
THE UNOPAN LEADER HAD DEVISED A METHOD OF GENETIC ENHANCEMENT THAT MIGHT ENGINEER A NEW BREED OF UNOPAN, STRONG ENOUGH TO WITHSTAND A VILTRUMITE INVASION.



DESPERATE TO FIND A WAY TO COMBAT THE EVER-EXPANDING VILTRUM EMPIRE, THE PLAN WAS APPROVED IMMEDIATELY.



FOR YEARS THE UNOPAN GOVERNMENT EXPERIMENTED ON UNBORN FETUSES. THE RESULTS WERE A COMPLETE FAILURE.



UNTIL ALLEN. HE WAS THE FIRST AND ONLY SUBJECT TO SURVIVE THE TESTS WITHOUT DISFIGUREMENT AND MENTAL HANDICAPS.



HE WAS THE ONLY SUCCESS.

NEARLY FROM THE DAY HE WAS BORN HE WAS TAUGHT TO BE THE GREATEST FIGHTER THE UNIVERSE HAD EVER SEEN.



FOR A TIME--IT SEEMED HE WAS A COMPLETE SUCCESS. EVEN BEFORE ADULTHOOD AN OPPONENT COULD NOT BE FOUND WHO DIDN'T FALL BEFORE HIS MIGHT.



IMMEDIATELY AFTER ADULTHOOD HAD BEEN REACHED HE WAS SENT ON HIS FIRST MISSION AGAINST THE VILTRUMITES.



IT DID NOT GO WELL. IT TURNED OUT THAT ALTHOUGH ALLEN WAS STRONGER THAN MOST EVERYTHING ELSE IN THE UNIVERSE, HE WAS NOT UP TO VILTRUMITE STANDARDS OF COMBAT.



WITH ALLEN DEFEATED, THE PROGRAM WAS ONCE AGAIN CONSIDERED A FAILURE, AND WAS SHUT DOWN FOR GOOD.



THE PROGRAM WASN'T A COMPLETE LOSS, ALLEN WAS SENT OUT INTO THE COSMOS UNDER THE GUISE OF "CHAMPION EVALUATION OFFICER."



HIS REAL MISSION WAS TO SEARCH FOR BEINGS STRONG ENOUGH TO DEFEAT HIM AND REPORT THEIR EXISTENCE TO THE COALITION.

THE HOPE WAS THAT IF THEY COULD DEFEAT HIM--MAYBE THEY WERE STRONG ENOUGH TO DEFEAT A VILTRUMITE AS WELL.





OF COURSE, DEAR READER,  
THE STORY DOES NOT, IN  
FACT, END THERE

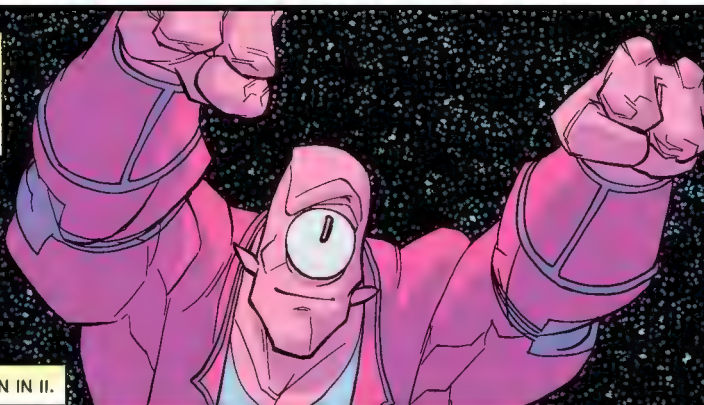
NOT EVEN  
CLOSE.



IF I WERE TO CONTINUE I WOULD  
TELL YOU OF THE TIMES NOLAN  
GRAYSON HAD DEFEATED ALLEN  
ON HIS ILL-FATED MISTAKEN  
ENCOUNTERS WITH THE PLANET  
EARTH.\*

HOW DUE TO ALLEN'S  
REPORTS, THE COALITION  
HAD SCHEDULED HIM  
MORE FREQUENT VISITS  
TO THE PLANET URATH.

\*SEEN BRIEFLY IN ISSUE 2, AND AGAIN IN II.



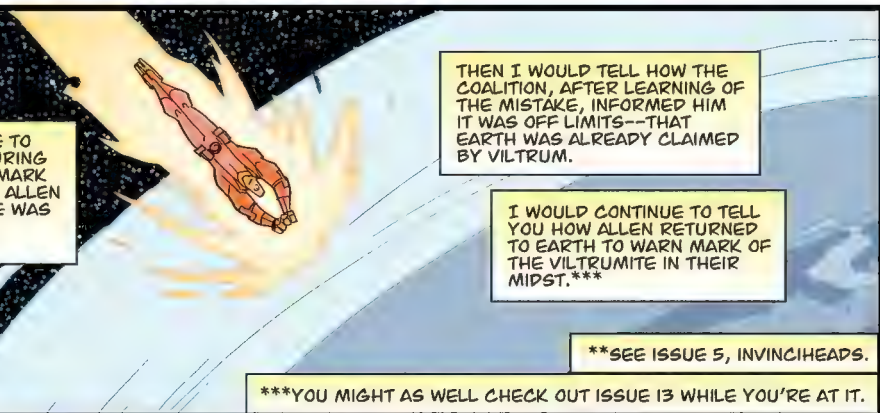
I WOULD EVEN CONTINUE TO  
TELL YOU ABOUT HOW DURING  
A CONFRONTATION WITH MARK  
GRAYSON, NOLAN'S SON. ALLEN  
LEARNED THE PLANET HE WAS  
REALLY VISITING WAS  
EARTH--NOT URATH.\*\*

THEN I WOULD TELL HOW THE  
COALITION, AFTER LEARNING OF  
THE MISTAKE, INFORMED HIM  
IT WAS OFF LIMITS--THAT  
EARTH WAS ALREADY CLAIMED  
BY VILTRUM.

I WOULD CONTINUE TO TELL  
YOU HOW ALLEN RETURNED  
TO EARTH TO WARN MARK OF  
THE VILTRUMITE IN THEIR  
MIDST.\*\*\*

\*\*SEE ISSUE 5, INVINCIBLEHEADS.

\*\*\*YOU MIGHT AS WELL CHECK OUT ISSUE 13 WHILE YOU'RE AT IT.

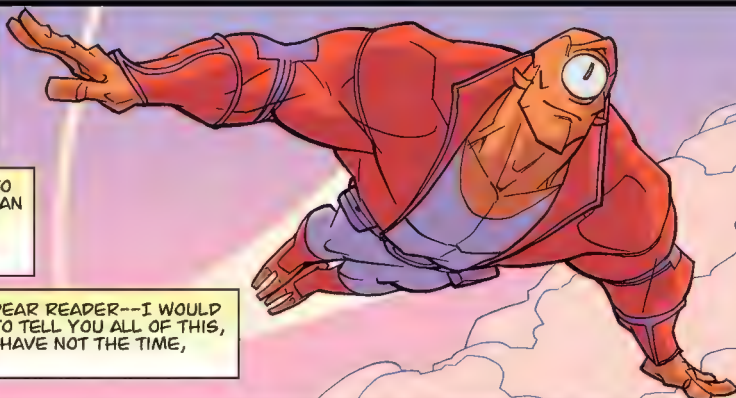


WERE I TO CONTINUE WITH  
THIS STORY EVEN FURTHER  
I WOULD INFORM YOU OF  
HOW ALLEN'S WARNING CAME  
TOO LATE. MARK'S FATHER  
WAS ALREADY REVEALED  
TO BE THAT VILTRUMITE.\*\*\*\*

ALL THIS INFORMATION LED TO  
ALLEN'S CURRENT MISSIVE, AN  
IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO BE  
GIVEN DIRECTLY TO THE  
COALITION LEADERS.

YES, DEAR READER--I WOULD  
LOVE TO TELL YOU ALL OF THIS,  
BUT I HAVE NOT THE TIME,  
FOR--

\*\*\*\*ALSO IN ISSUE 13.





**ALLEN THE ALIEN  
HAS RETURNED  
HOME!**



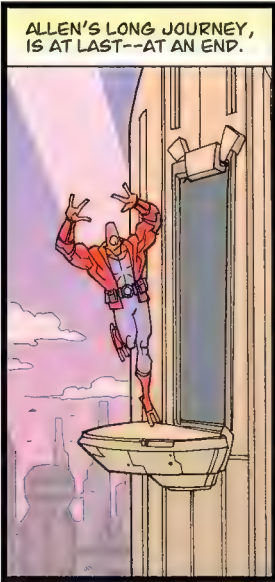


YES, HOME, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE PLANET TALESCRIA, THE CAPITAL OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS.

FAR BELOW ALLEN, MILLIONS OF PEOPLE GO ABOUT THEIR DAILY LIVES, UNAWARE OF HIS RETURN.

UNAWARE OF THE NEWS HE CARRIES WITH HIM.

UNAWARE OF THE HOPE IT MAY BRING THEM.



ALLEN'S LONG JOURNEY, IS AT LAST--AT AN END.



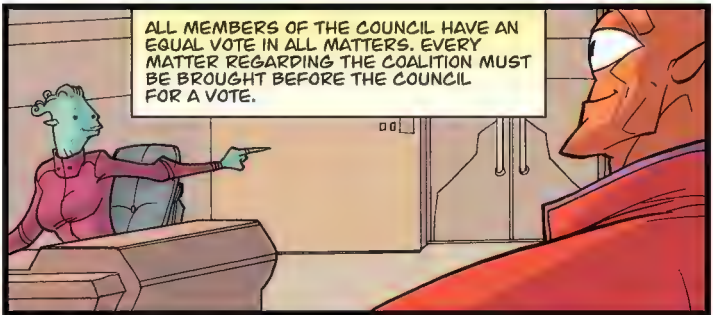
FROM THIS HUMBLE BUILDING AMIDST THE MILLION SKYSCRAPERS OF TALESCRIA, THE FATE OF THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE IS DECIDED.



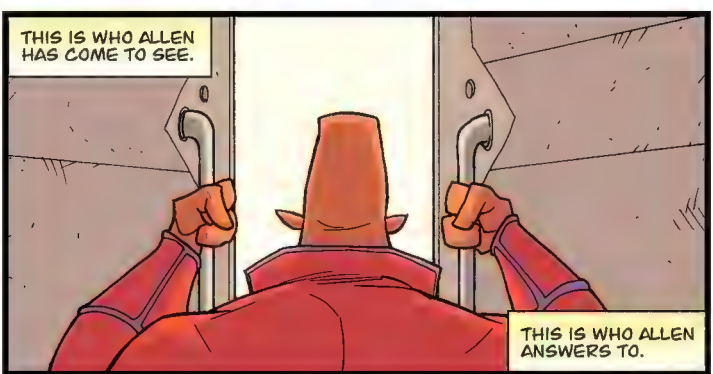
THIS BUILDING HOUSES THE MEETING HALL OF THE HIGH COUNCIL OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS. ALL DECISIONS ON ALL MATTERS ARE DECIDED HERE.



THE HIGH COUNCIL CONSISTS OF ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES FROM ALL THE PLANETS IN THE COALITION.



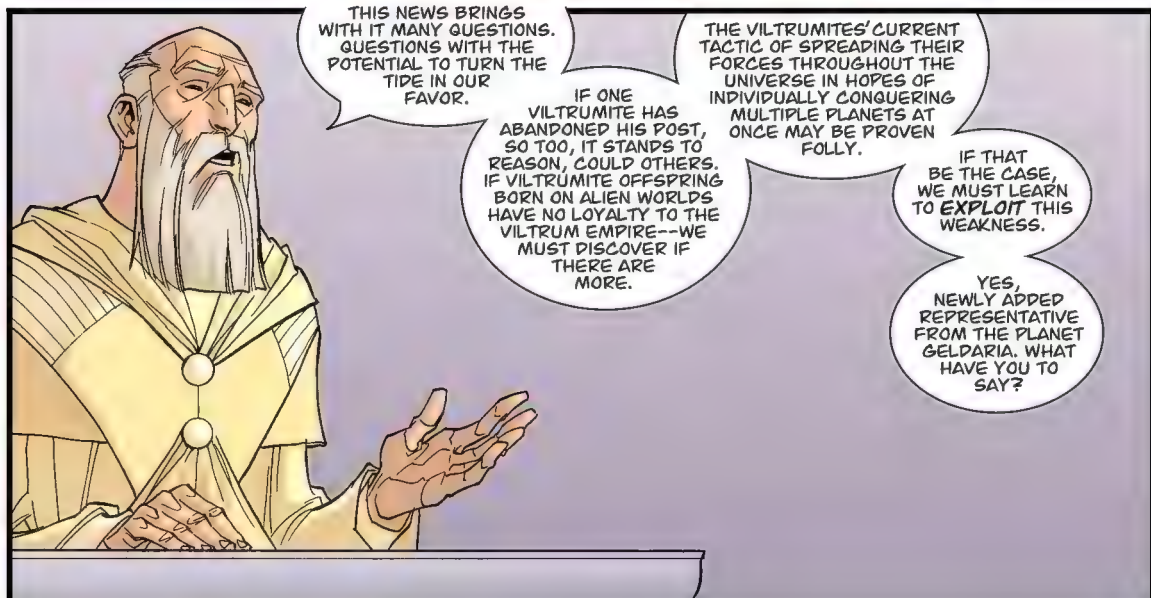
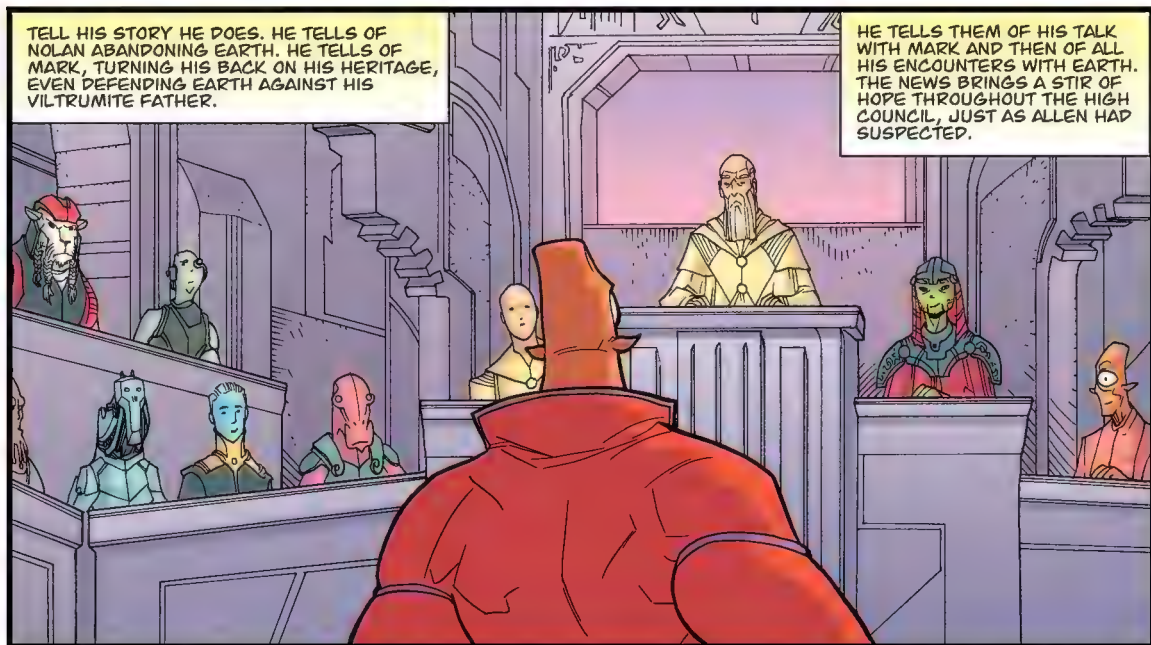
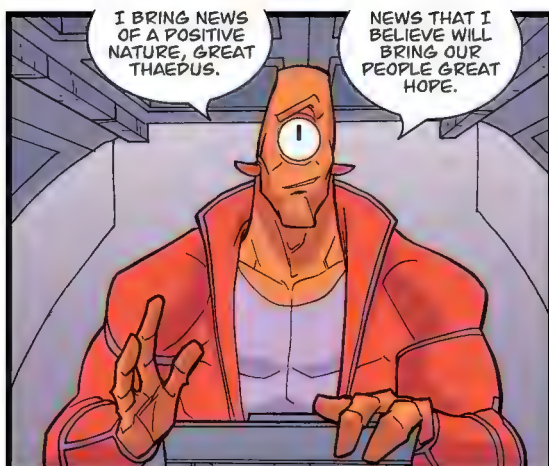
ALL MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL HAVE AN EQUAL VOTE IN ALL MATTERS. EVERY MATTER REGARDING THE COALITION MUST BE BROUGHT BEFORE THE COUNCIL FOR A VOTE.

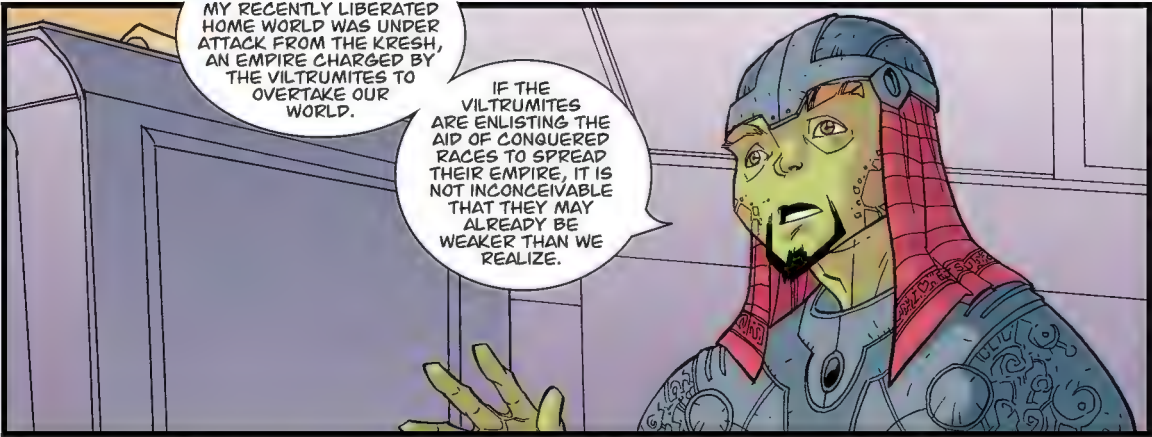


THIS IS WHO ALLEN HAS COME TO SEE.

THIS IS WHO ALLEN ANSWERS TO.

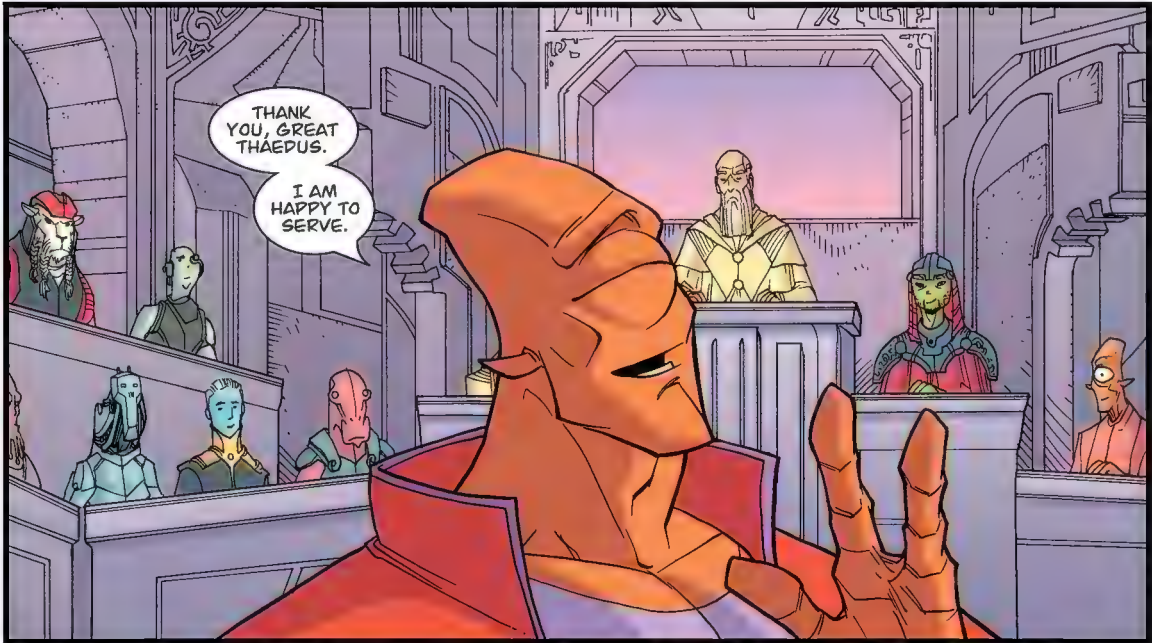




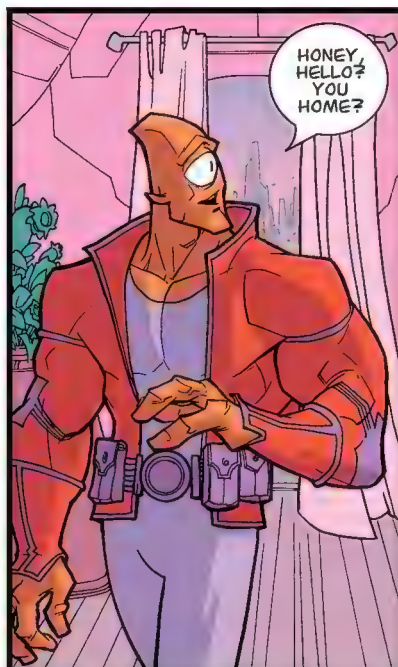
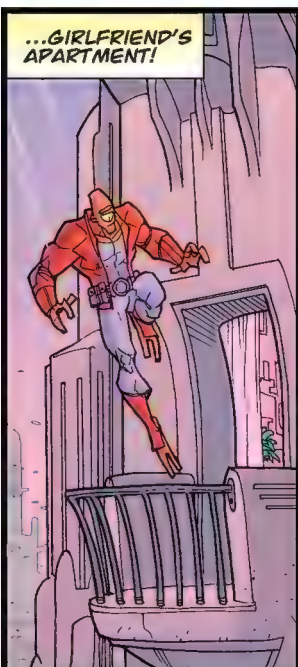
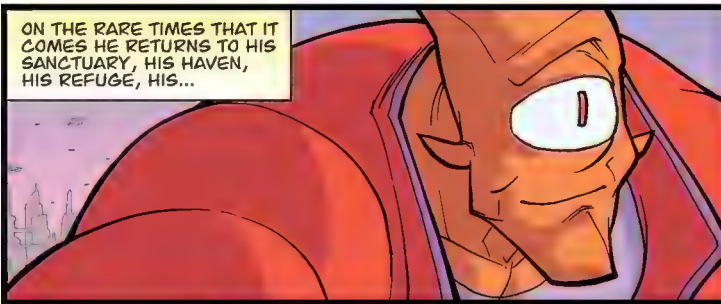
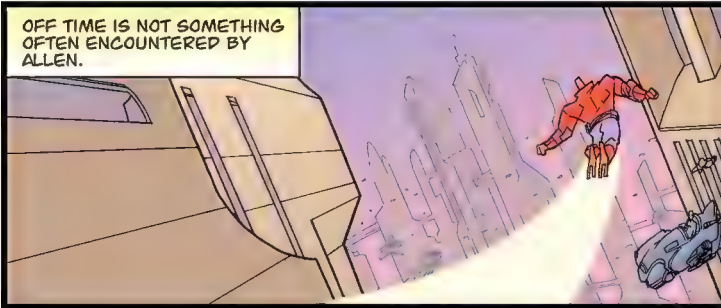
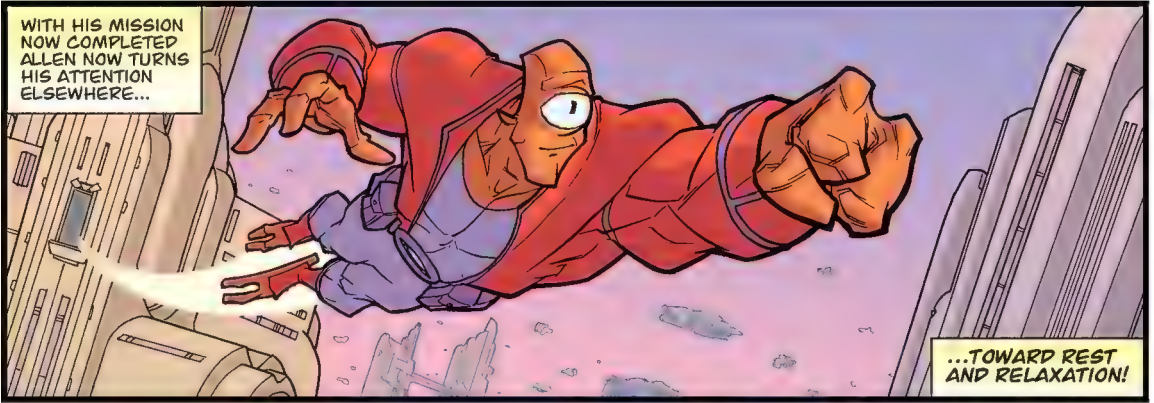


FURTHERMORE, WE MUST SEEK OUT THESE ROGUE VILTRUMITES AND ATTEMPT TO SWAY THEM TO OUR CAUSE. THEY WOULD BE VALUABLE ALLIES.

THE ONE CALLED INVINCIBLE. THE OFFSPRING BORN ON EARTH IS SYMPATHETIC TO OUR CAUSE. ANYTHING THAT WILL PREVENT THE EVENTUAL TAKEOVER OF EARTH WILL GAIN HIS ASSISTANCE.









I HAVE MISSED YOU A GREAT DEAL, TELIA.

LIKewise, HON'. YOU IN THE MOOD FOR A LITTLE "CATCHING UP?" I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU IN MONTHS.

TELIA-- PLEASE. YOU KNOW THAT I CAN'T--

WHAT? WHAT CAN'T YOU DO, ALLEN?

WHY MUST YOU ALWAYS INSIST ON THINGS YOU KNOW I CAN'T DO? PHYSICAL LOVE IS FORBIDDEN AMONG MY PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY WITH OTHER RACES.

I KNOW ALL ABOUT YOUR RULES, ALLEN. "ENSURING THE SURVIVAL OF YOUR PEOPLE" AND ALL THAT CRAP.

I KNOW YOUR PEOPLE WERE ENDANGERED HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO BUT EVERYONE KNOWS YOU'RE IN NO DANGER OF EXTINCTION NOW.

YOU'VE ALL JUST GROWN ACCUSTOMED TO YOUR BACKWARDS METHODS.

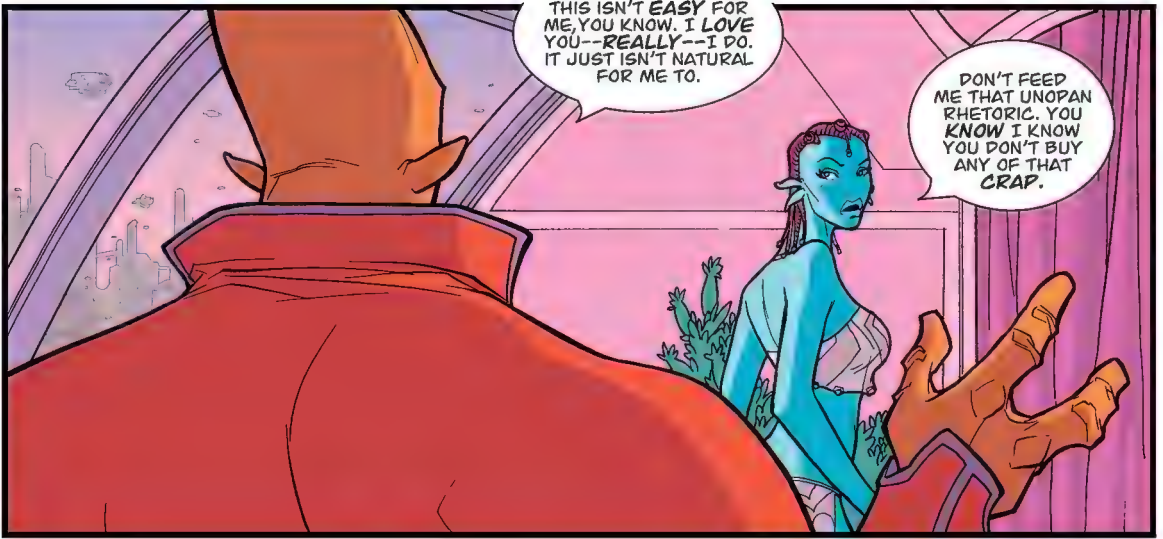
YOUR BREEDING FACTORIES MAY BE MORE EFFICIENT BUT I PROMISE YOU THEY'RE NOT AS FUN.

OH, NO. HOW CAN I TELL TELIA HOW MUCH I TRULY FEEL FOR HER WITHOUT BREAKING UNOPAN'S MOST SACRED LAWS?

I COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT TELIA--I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'D DO IF I WERE TO LOSE HER. BUT--MY PEOPLE NEED ME--I CAN'T WASTE MYSELF ON RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES WITH HER...

...CAN I?





THIS ISN'T EASY FOR ME, YOU KNOW. I LOVE YOU--REALLY--I DO. IT JUST ISN'T NATURAL FOR ME TO.

DON'T FEED ME THAT UNOPAN RHETORIC. YOU KNOW I KNOW YOU DON'T BUY ANY OF THAT CRAP.



BUT IF I'M DISCOVERED-- I COULD BE STRIPPED OF MY TITLE. I'VE GOT A DEPOSIT CYCLE COMING UP. IF MY LEVELS AREN'T ABOVE STANDARD--THEY'LL REALIZE--



THAT NEVER STOPPED YOU BEFORE. DO YOU REALIZE HOW MANY MONTHS I'VE WAITED FOR THIS?

GET IN HERE.



OKAY OKAY! YOU WIN.

LET'S GO.

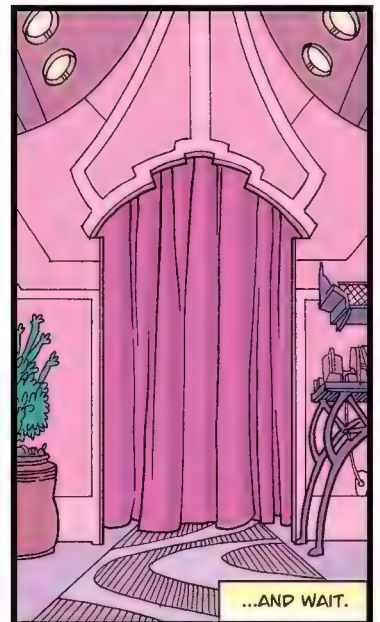


WITH NO CHARACTERS READY AVAILABLE FOR US TO TURN OUR ATTENTION TO, WE'RE FORCED TO PATIENTLY WAIT OUTSIDE.

(YOU DON'T EVEN WANT TO KNOW WHAT REX SFLODE IS DOING RIGHT NOW.)



YES, OUT OF COURTESY FOR ALLEN, TELIA, AND ALL THE YOUNGER READERS IN THE AUDIENCE WE'LL JUST WAIT...



...AND WAIT.



LATER--AFTER THE REUNION HAS COMPLETED ITS CARNAL FESTIVITIES--

OUR ATTENTION REFOCUSSES ON ALLEN, HIGH ABOVE TALESRIA, CAPITAL OF THE COALITION OF PLANETS.

IT HAS BEEN MERE HOURS AND ALLEN AND TELIA NOW FIND THEMSELVES ENJOYING A LATE BREAKFAST AT THEIR FAVORITE DINER.



OH, MAN! I DON'T REALIZE HOW MUCH I MISS FRESH KANZLOK WHILE I'M OUT ON MY MISSIONS UNTIL I GET BACK.

I CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING I MISS MORE.

I CAN THINK OF ONE THING.

HMM?

YES OF COURSE--THAT... AND YOU. I MEANT **FOOD** SPECIFICALLY. I'M ALWAYS THINKING ABOUT THALMUN BARS AND OTHER SWEETS BUT I NEVER THINK ABOUT KANZLOK UNTIL I GET BACK.

AND PLEASE-- DON'T SPEAK OF OUR--YOU KNOW-- IN PUBLIC. IT'S TOO RISKY.

WHAT? LIKE THERE'S SOME **UNOPAN** SPY SITTING AT THE NEXT BOOTH OVER THAT'S GOING TO SEE YOU CONVERSING WITH ME, PIECE TOGETHER THE MEANING OF OUR HALF FINISHED STATEMENTS AND ARREST YOU ON THE SPOT?

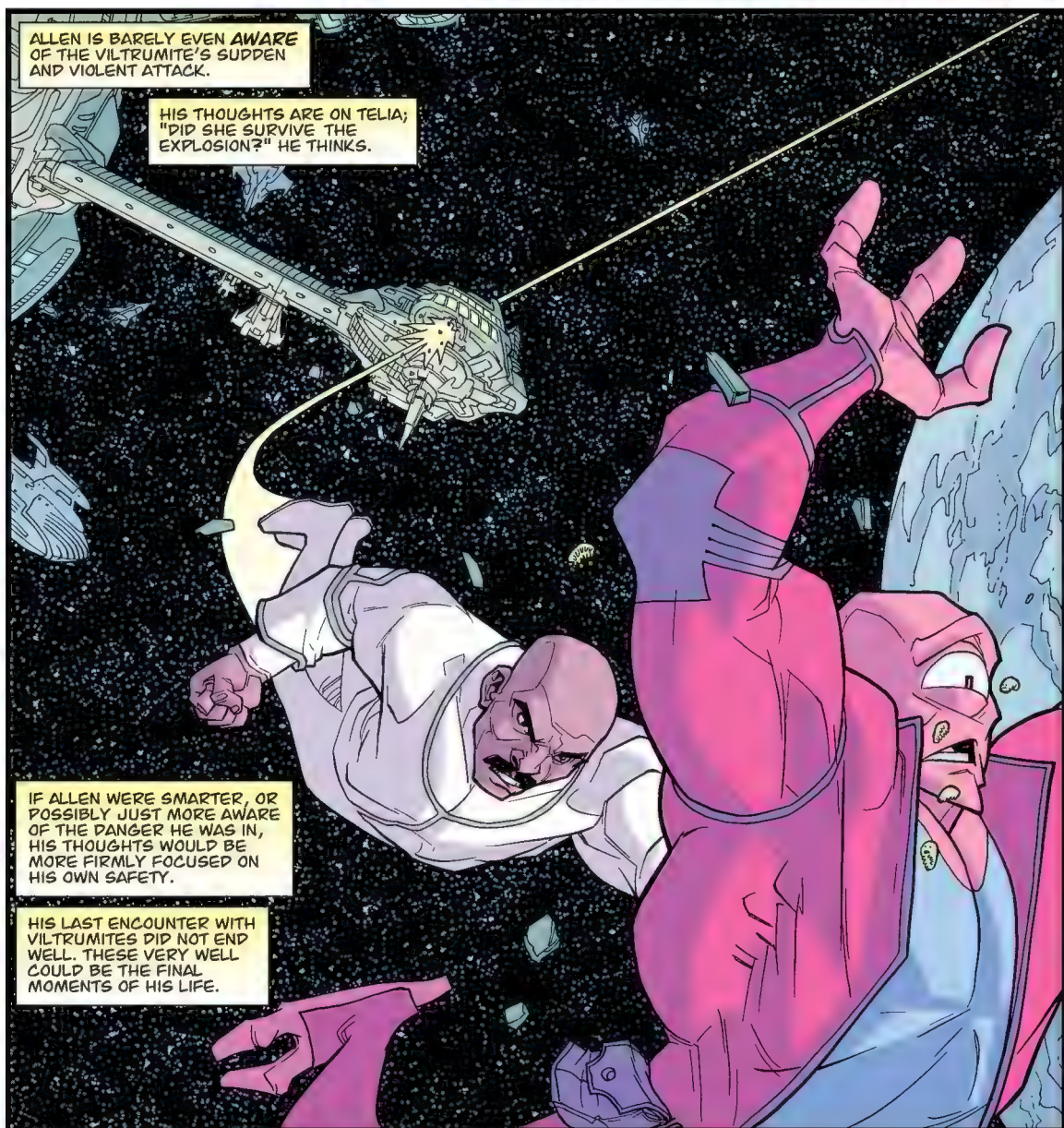
THAT'S RIDICUL--





ALLEN IS BARELY EVEN AWARE  
OF THE VILTRUMITE'S SUDDEN  
AND VIOLENT ATTACK.

HIS THOUGHTS ARE ON TELIA;  
"DID SHE SURVIVE THE  
EXPLOSION?" HE THINKS.



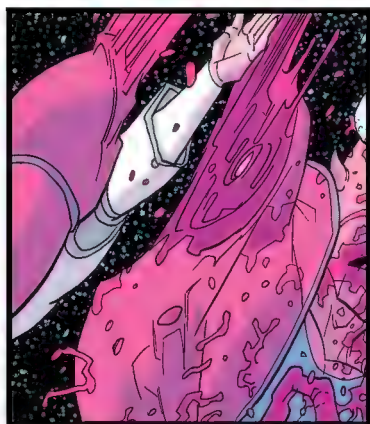
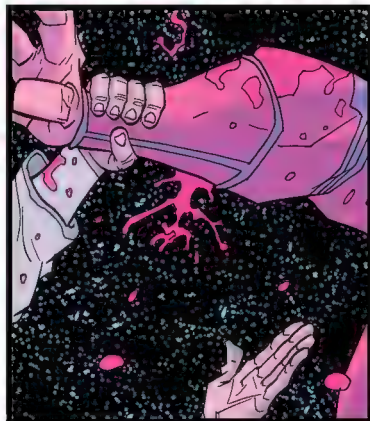
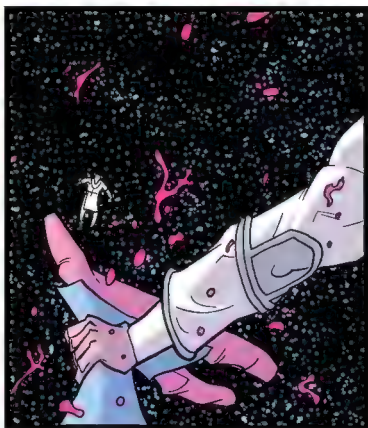
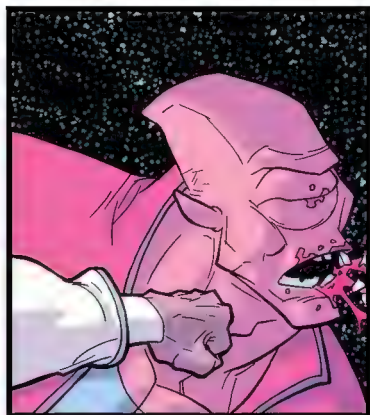
IF ALLEN WERE SMARTER, OR  
POSSIBLY JUST MORE AWARE  
OF THE DANGER HE WAS IN,  
HIS THOUGHTS WOULD BE  
MORE FIRMLY FOCUSED ON  
HIS OWN SAFETY.

HIS LAST ENCOUNTER WITH  
VILTRUMITES DID NOT END  
WELL. THESE VERY WELL  
COULD BE THE FINAL  
MOMENTS OF HIS LIFE.





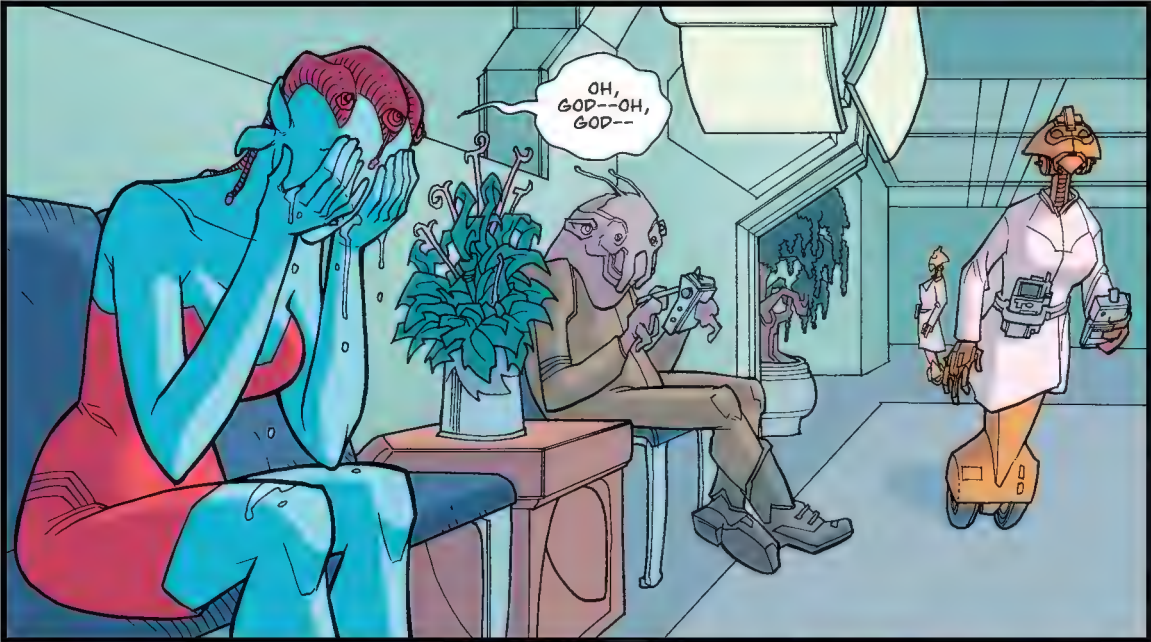
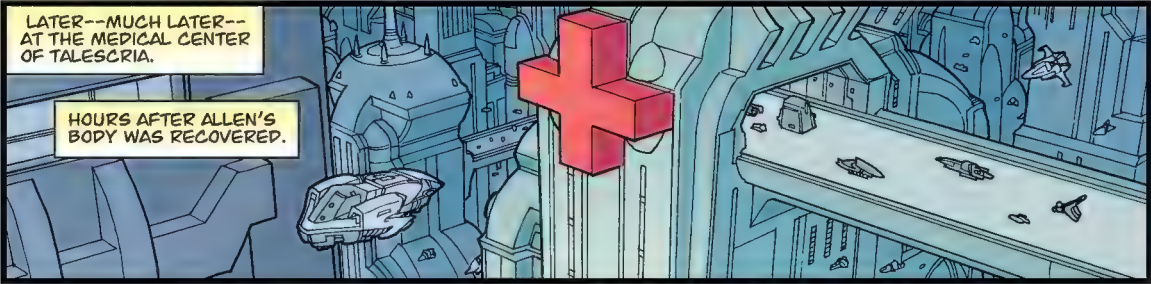










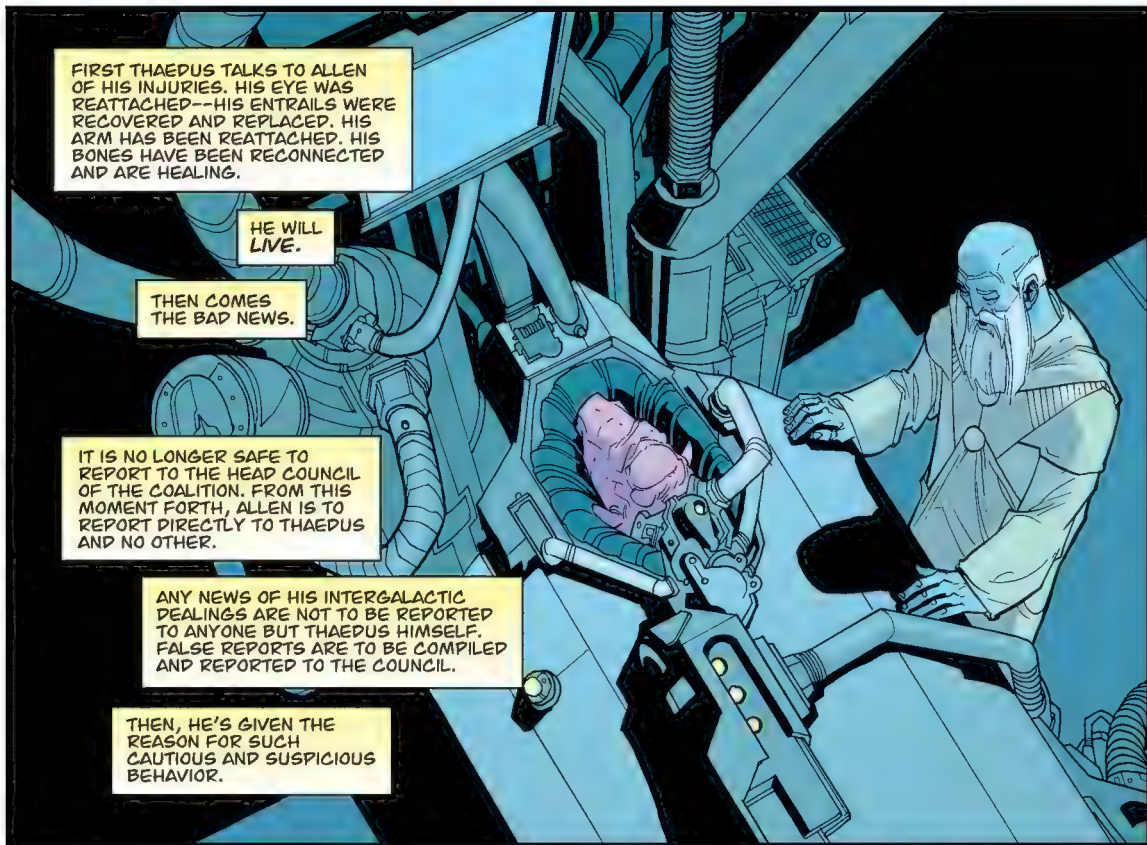






DO NOT ATTEMPT TO MOVE  
OR REPLY. THOSE FACILITIES  
WILL BE BEYOND YOUR GRASP  
FOR SOME TIME--BUT  
LISTEN.

I  
KNOW  
YOU CAN  
LISTEN.



FIRST THAEDUS TALKS TO ALLEN  
OF HIS INJURIES. HIS EYE WAS  
REATTACHED--HIS ENTRAILS WERE  
RECOVERED AND REPLACED. HIS  
ARM HAS BEEN REATTACHED. HIS  
BONES HAVE BEEN RECONNECTED  
AND ARE HEALING.

HE WILL  
LIVE.

THEN COMES  
THE BAD NEWS.

IT IS NO LONGER SAFE TO  
REPORT TO THE HEAD COUNCIL  
OF THE COALITION. FROM THIS  
MOMENT FORTH, ALLEN IS TO  
REPORT DIRECTLY TO THAEDUS  
AND NO OTHER.

ANY NEWS OF HIS INTERGALACTIC  
DEALINGS ARE NOT TO BE REPORTED  
TO ANYONE BUT THAEDUS HIMSELF.  
FALSE REPORTS ARE TO BE COMPILED  
AND REPORTED TO THE COUNCIL.

THEN, HE'S GIVEN THE  
REASON FOR SUCH  
CAUTIOUS AND SUSPICIOUS  
BEHAVIOR.



THERE IS A MOLE  
WITHIN THE HEAD  
COUNCIL OF THE  
COALITION.

UNTIL HE  
IS DISCOVERED  
AND **ELIMINATED**--  
NO ONE IS SAFE.  
THE VERY COALITION  
**ITSELF** IS IN  
JEOPARDY.

THIS  
COULD VERY  
WELL BE THE  
BEGINNING  
OF THE  
END.





MARK,  
HONEY--  
WAKE UP--  
YOU HAVE  
TO WAKE  
UP.

YOU  
HAVE TO  
GO BEFORE  
SOMEONE  
SEES YOU  
HERE.



I--I WAS THINKING  
MAYBE I COULD  
SPEND THE NIGHT  
HERE. Y'KNOW, SINCE  
YOU DON'T HAVE A  
ROOMMATE OR  
ANYTHING.

I  
JUST--  
I WANTED  
TO SLEEP  
NEXT TO  
YOU.



LOOK AT THE CLOCK,  
SILLY. YOU DID  
SLEEP NEXT TO  
ME--IT'S ALMOST  
MORNING. YOU  
NEED TO GET OUT  
OF HERE BEFORE  
THE SUN COMES  
UP AND IT'LL BE  
EASIER TO SPOT  
YOU. I KNOW  
YOU'RE SUPER FAST  
AND ALL THAT, BUT  
I DON'T WANT TO  
RISK IT.



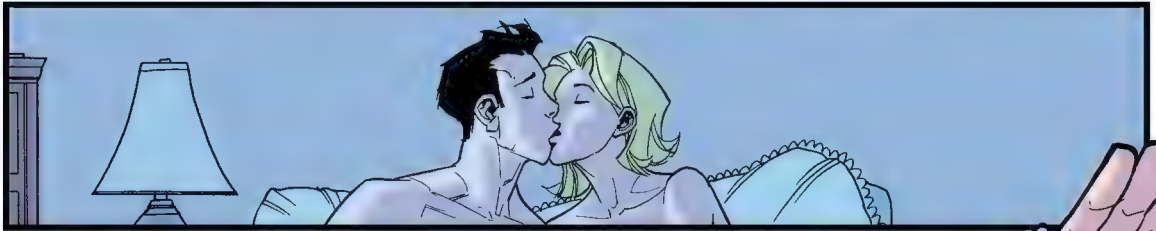
OKAY--SORRY.  
JUST, UH... LET  
ME GET MY  
CLOTHES  
ON.

MARK?


YEAH?



LAST  
NIGHT WAS  
PERFECT.







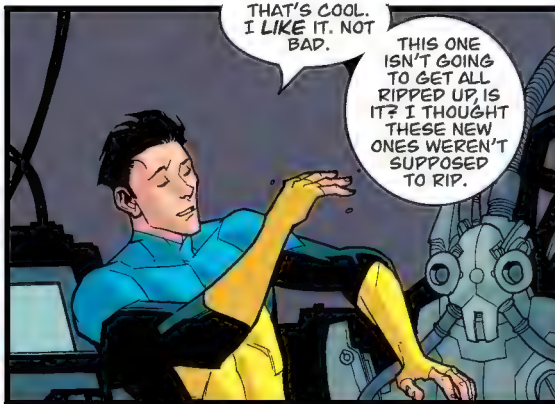
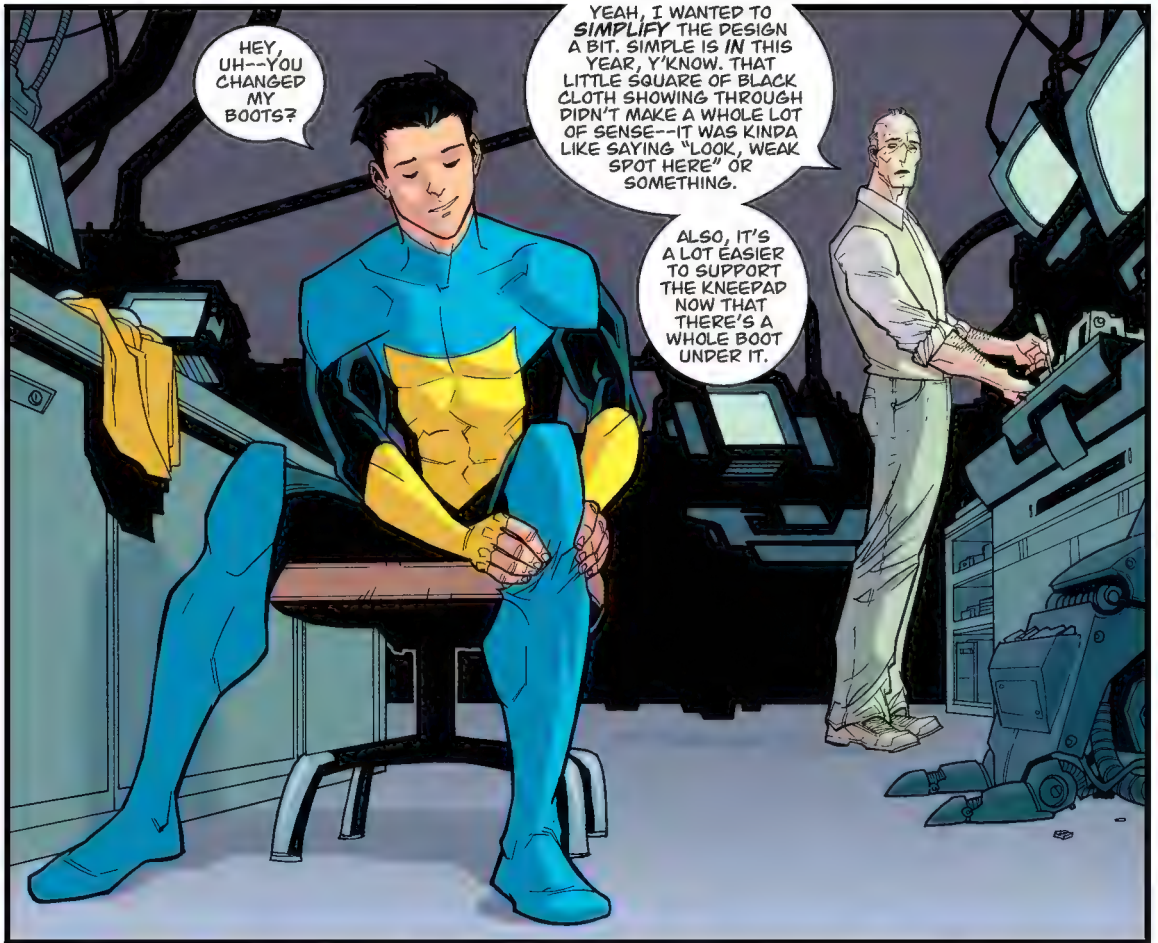
**\*\*SEE ISSUE 5, INVINCIBLEHEADS.**



# CHAPTER SIX



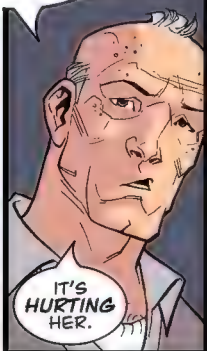






I DON'T  
KNOW, A  
WEEK...  
TWO?

TRY A MONTH. FOR A NORMAL  
COLLEGE KID THAT WOULDN'T  
BE A BIG DEAL, YOU'RE  
GROWING UP--IT'S GOOD TO  
GET AWAY FROM THE NEST--  
BUT, SON--SHE KNOWS  
YOU CAN COME VISIT  
HER IN A SPLIT  
SECOND.



IT'S  
HURTING  
HER.

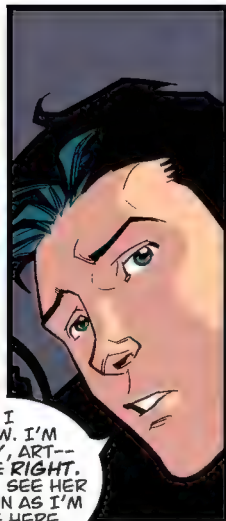
I KNOW--I KEEP MEANING TO  
SEE HER BUT THEN SOMETHING  
COMES UP. AND THAT HOUSE--  
IT'S GOT SO MANY MEMORIES.  
SINCE I GOT OUT OF IT, I'VE  
BEEN ABLE TO PUT THINGS  
OUT OF MY  
MIND.



I'M  
RELUCTANT  
TO GO  
BACK.



SHE'S  
YOUR  
MOTHER,  
MARK. GO  
SEE HER.



I  
KNOW. I'M  
SORRY, ART--  
YOU'RE RIGHT--  
I'LL GO SEE HER  
AS SOON AS I'M  
DONE HERE.

IT'LL DO YOU  
GOOD TO GET OUT  
OF THAT DORM  
ROOM, AWAY FROM  
ALL THE PARTIES  
AND WHATEVER  
ELSE IS GOING  
ON THERE.



HEH--I'VE  
BEEN AWAY  
FROM MY  
DORM ROOM  
PLENTY.

I DIDN'T  
EVEN SLEEP  
THERE LAST  
NIGHT.



OH?



WELL! I MEAN!  
UH! IT'S JUST  
THAT MY GIRL-  
FRIEND AND I--  
UM--NO, UH.  
I--UH.

UM...



YOU CAN  
STOP RIGHT  
THERE, MARK.  
I DON'T NEED  
TO HEAR ANY  
MORE THAN  
THAT.



YOU'RE AT A GOOD  
AGE FOR THAT--JUST  
BE CAREFUL. YOU SEEM  
HAPPY. IT'S A GOOD  
LOOK FOR YOU--A  
WELCOME  
CHANGE.

HAPPY?

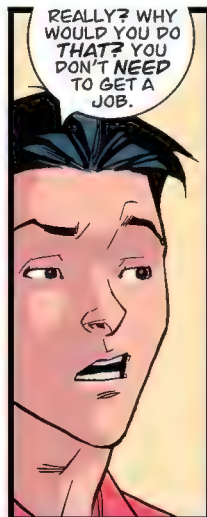
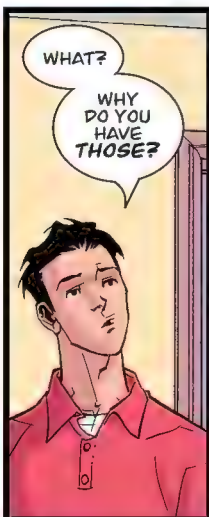
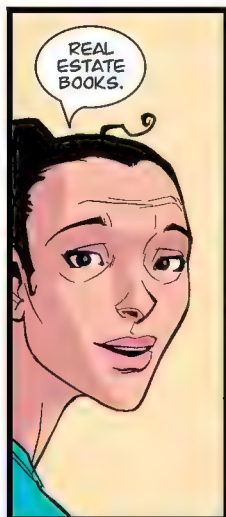
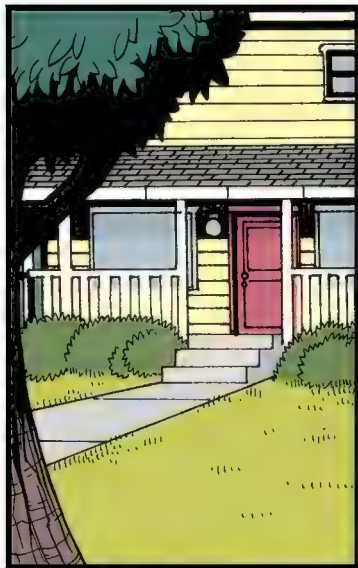


YEAH...

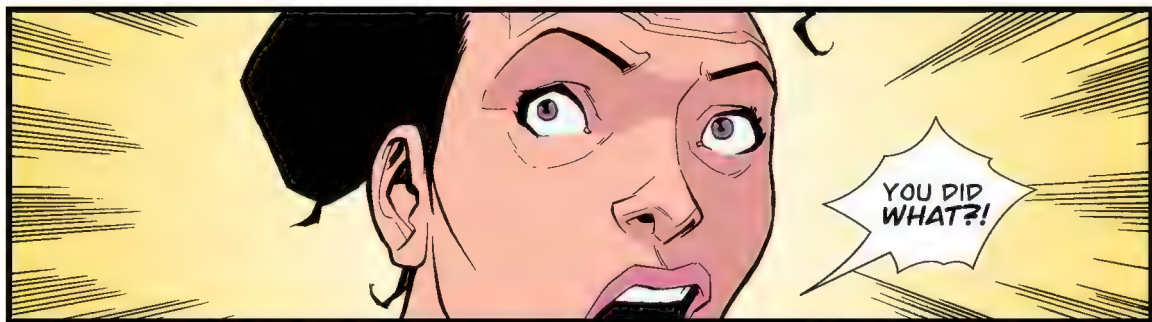
I  
GUESS  
I AM.



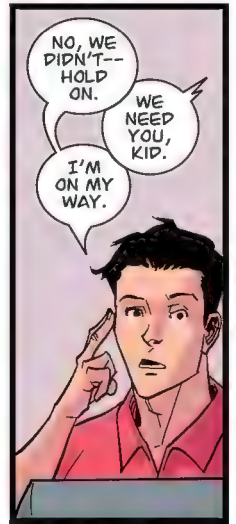
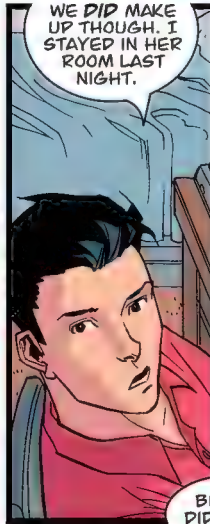
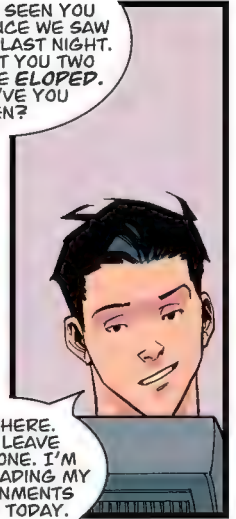
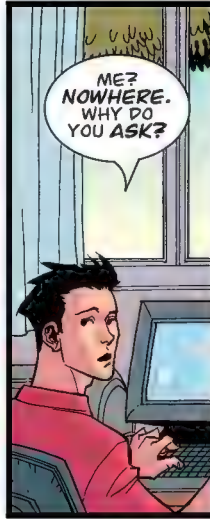
















TIME  
TO MAKE  
THE  
DONUTS.

I THINK  
I SPEAK ON  
BEHALF OF BOTH  
OF US WHEN I  
SAY IT HAS BEEN  
AN HONOR TO WORK  
ON SUCH A PROJECT  
WITH YOU,  
**ANGSTROM  
LEVY.**



YES, THIS IS AN UNDERTAKING THAT RANKS AMONG OUR **HIGHEST** ACHIEVEMENTS--AND I THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO FURTHER OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE MULTI-VERSE.

TO THINK--IN MERE MOMENTS WE'LL DOWNLOAD THE MEMORIES OF THOUSANDS OF YOUR DOPPELGANGERS FROM OTHER DIMENSIONS IN ORDER TO GIVE YOU THE ABILITY TO SHIFT FROM ONE DIMENSION TO THE NEXT WITH THE FULL KNOWLEDGE OF WHERE YOU'RE GOING.

WE MAY VERY WELL BE CHANGING THE COURSE OF HUMAN HISTORY ACROSS THE MULTI-VERSE.

WE'RE READY WHEN YOU ARE.

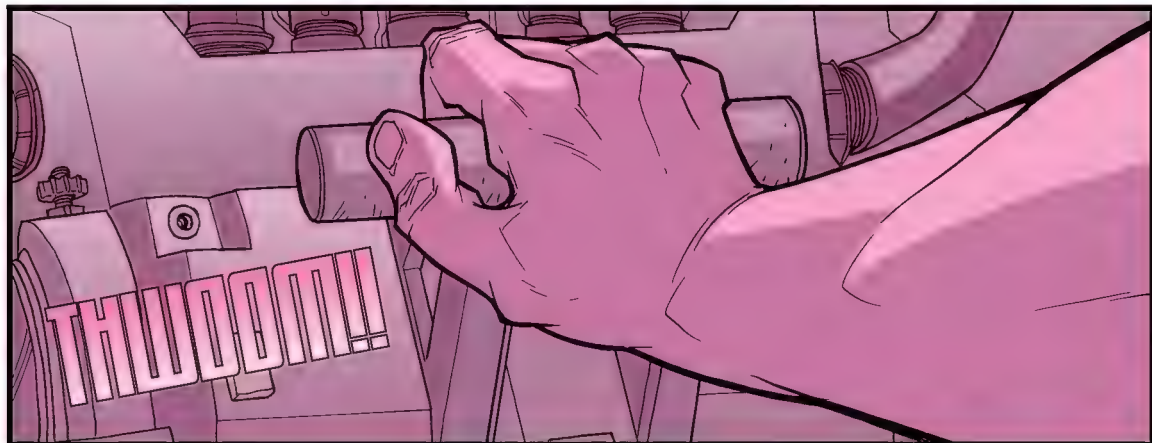
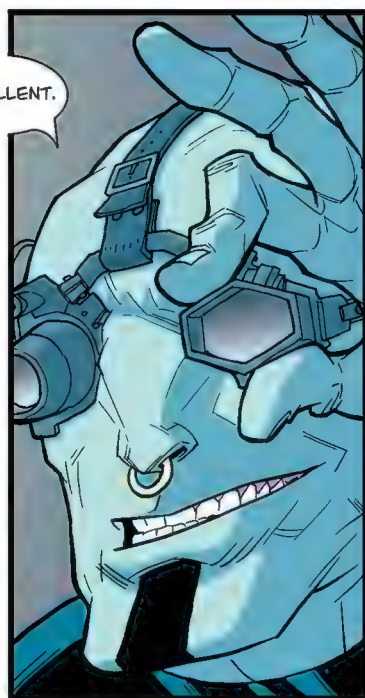
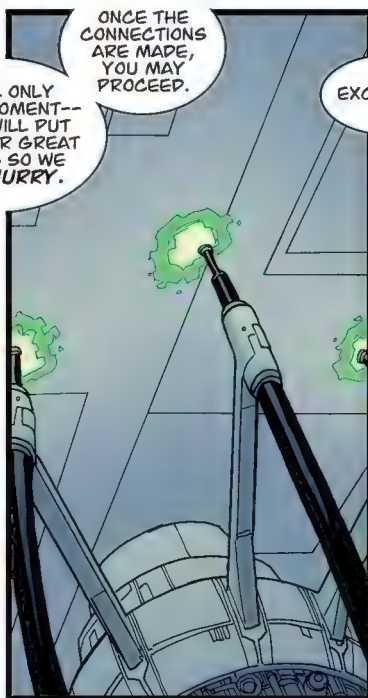


GIVE ME A MOMENT TO LINK OUR MACHINE TO THE ONES IN OUR **SISTER** DIMENSIONS.

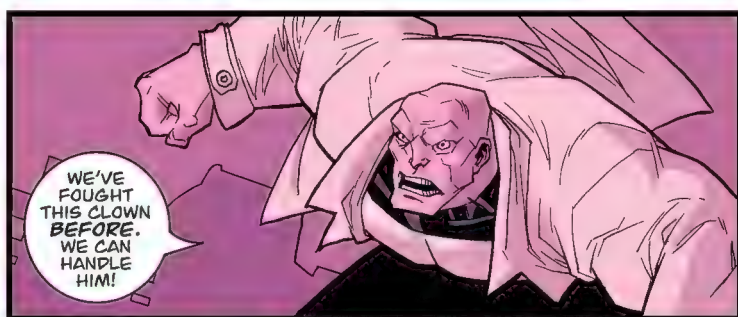
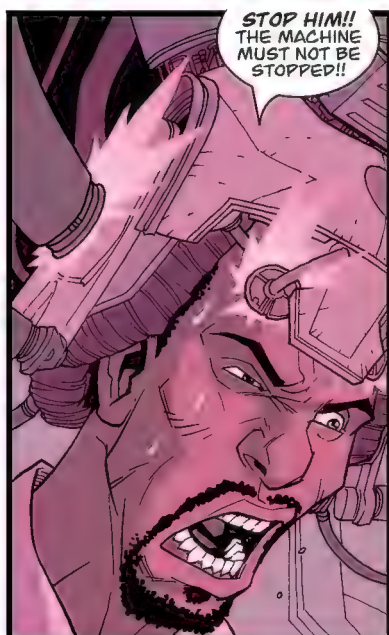
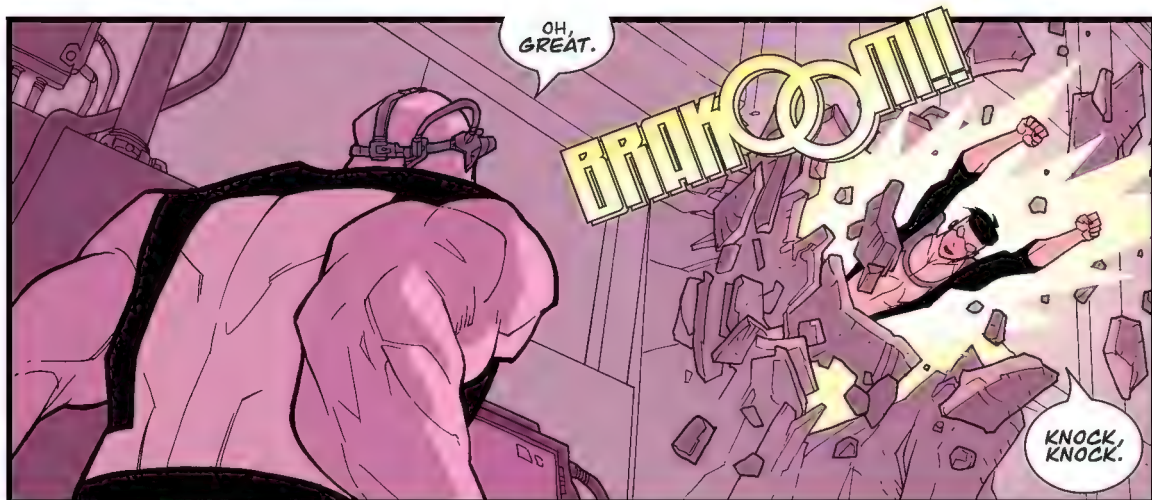
IT WILL ONLY TAKE A MOMENT-- BUT IT WILL PUT ME UNDER GREAT STRESS SO WE MUST HURRY.

ONCE THE CONNECTIONS ARE MADE, YOU MAY PROCEED.

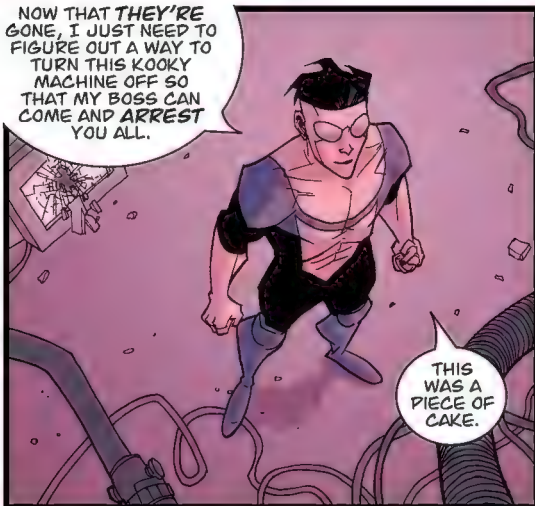
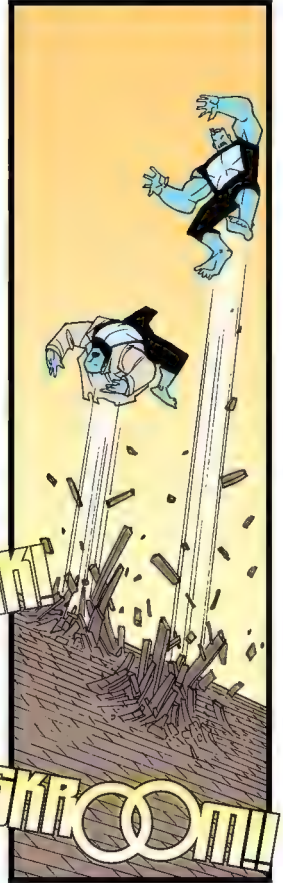
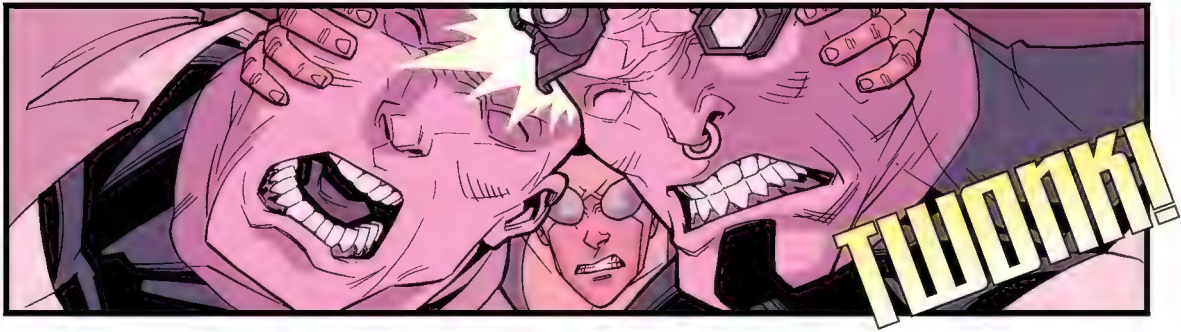
EXCELLENT.



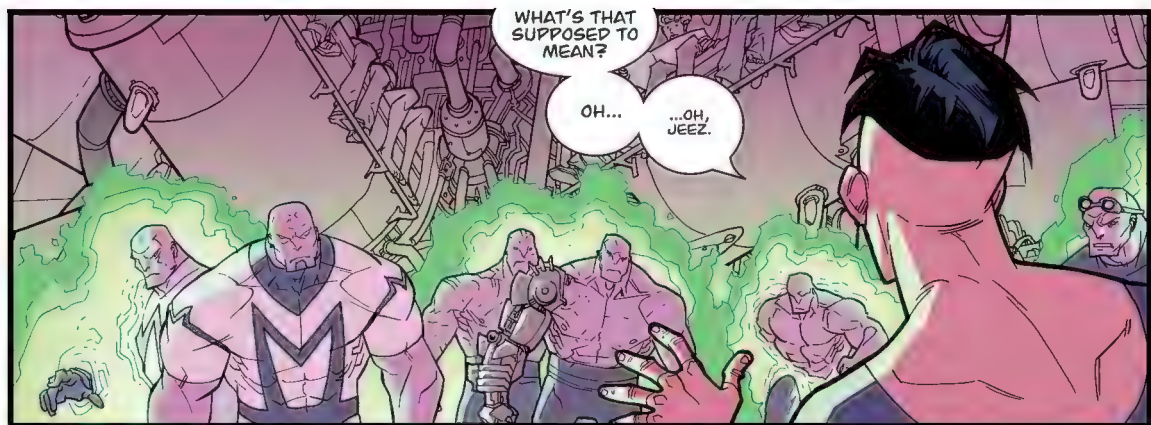
















STAY  
BACK!

THAT WAS AN  
IMPRESSIVE  
PUNCH. IT'S A  
GOOD THING  
HE WASN'T  
ALONE.

GOOD  
FOR US, I  
MEAN.

KROR!!!

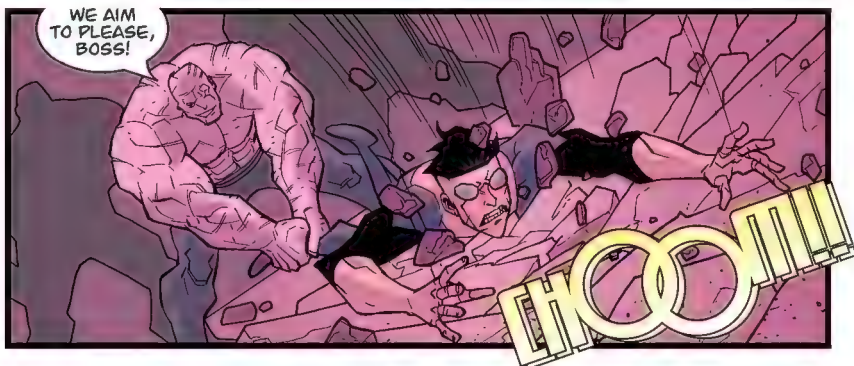


YOU'RE  
NOT GETTING  
AWAY THAT  
EASY!!

WE'RE  
NOT DONE  
WITH YOU  
BY A LONG  
SHOT!



JUST---  
KEEP HIM  
AWAY!! I CAN  
FEEL THE MACHINE  
WORKING---I CAN  
FEEL MY MIND---  
EXPANDING!



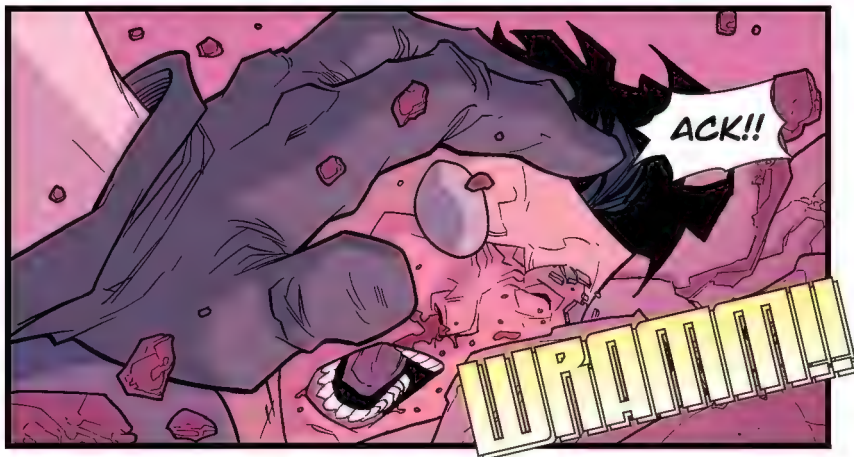
WE AIM  
TO PLEASE,  
BOSS!

CHOOOM!!!



SAVE  
SOME FOR  
US!

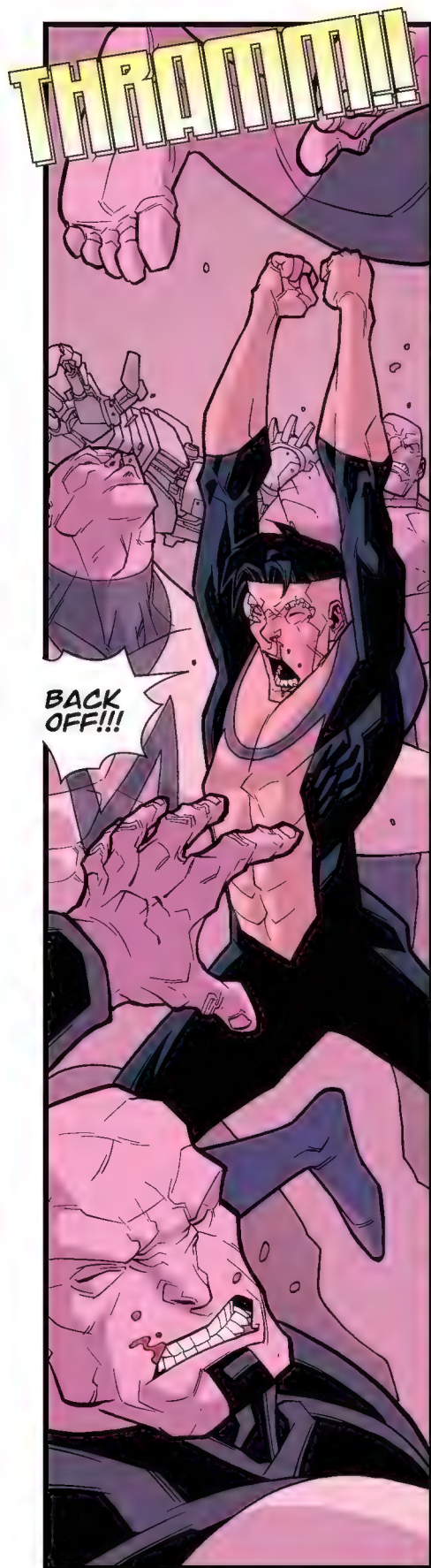
JUST  
BECAUSE WE  
DON'T KNOW  
WHO HE IS  
DOESN'T MEAN  
WE DON'T WANT  
TO HURT  
HIM!



ACK!!

WRAMMM!!!





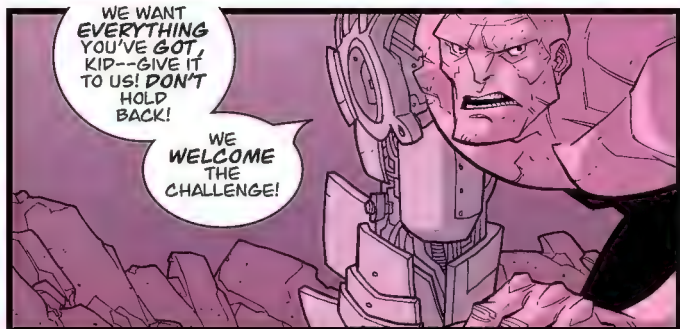
YOU THINK  
I CAN'T HURT  
YOU?! YOU THINK  
I WON'T TRY?!  
I WON'T LET  
YOU KILL  
ME!

STOP  
FIGHTING  
ME--OR BE  
READY FOR  
WHAT'S COMING.  
I PROMISE YOU  
I'VE BEEN  
HOLDING  
BACK!



WE WANT  
EVERYTHING  
YOU'VE GOT,  
KID--GIVE IT  
TO US! DON'T  
HOLD  
BACK!

WE  
WELCOME  
THE  
CHALLENGE!



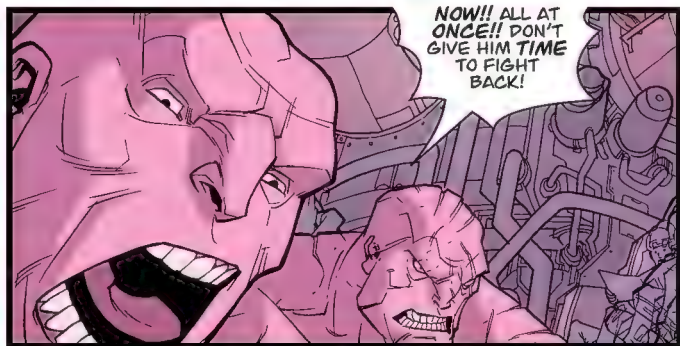
YOU  
ASKED  
FOR--

--IRK!!

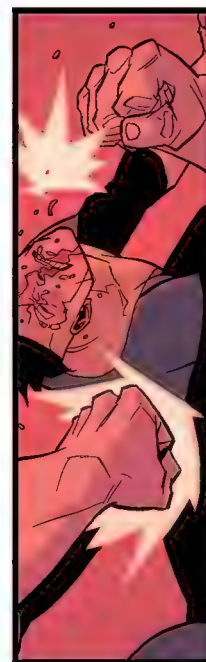
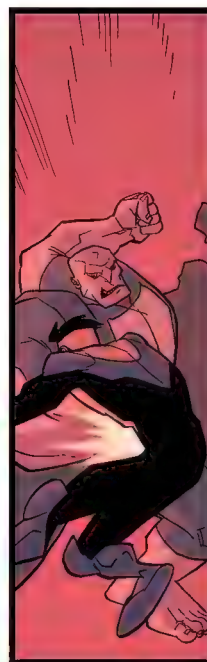
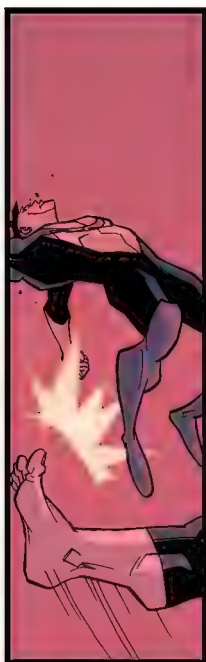
QUICKLY--  
BEFORE HE  
BREAKS  
FREE!



NOW!! ALL AT  
ONCE!! DON'T  
GIVE HIM TIME  
TO FIGHT  
BACK!



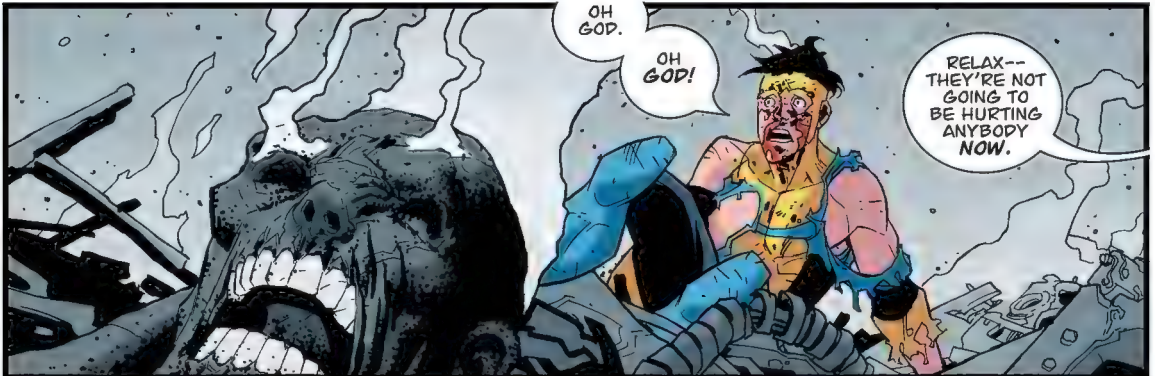
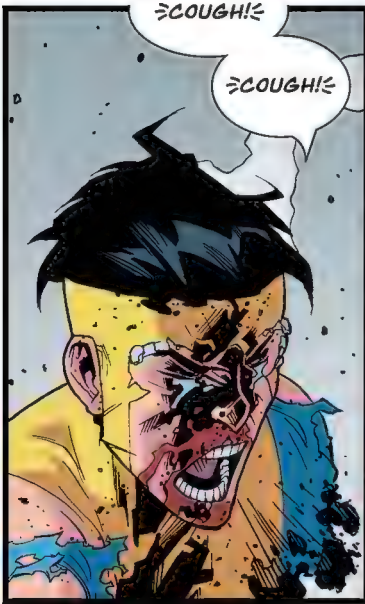








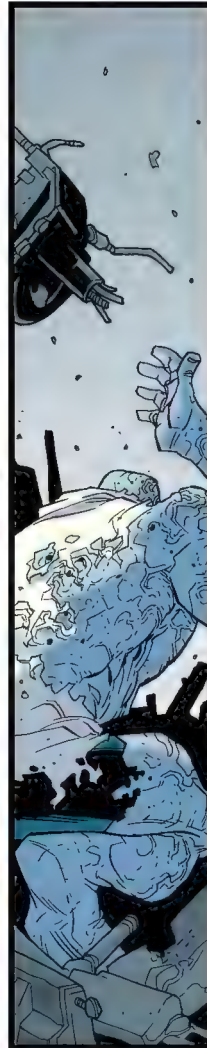
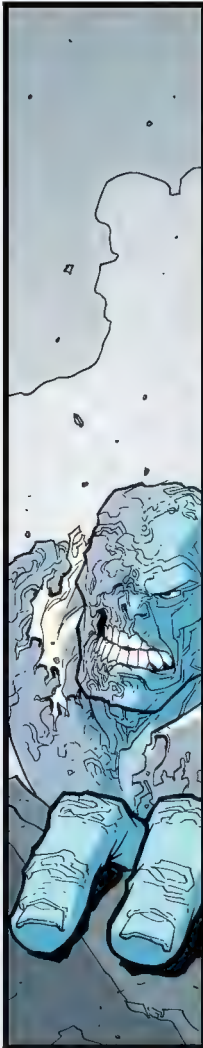
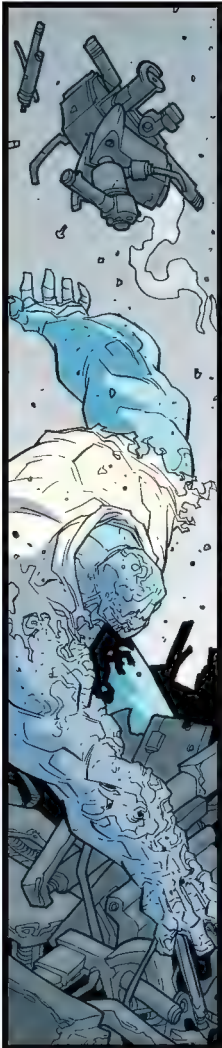
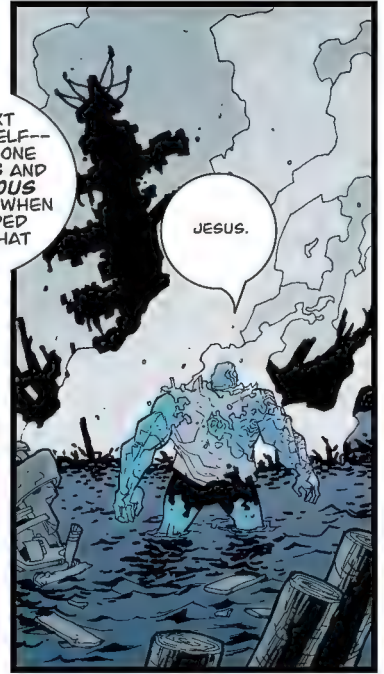




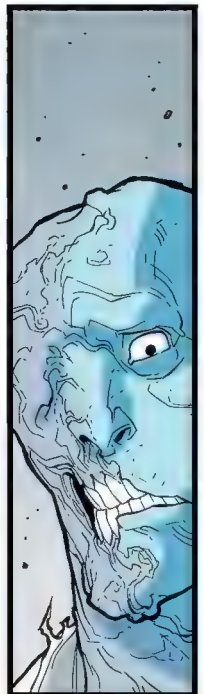
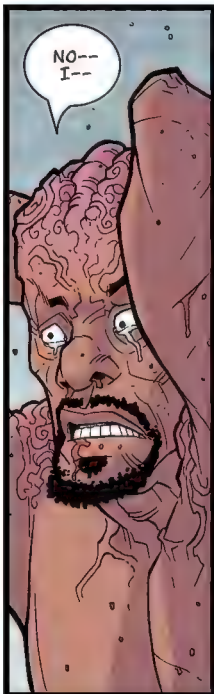
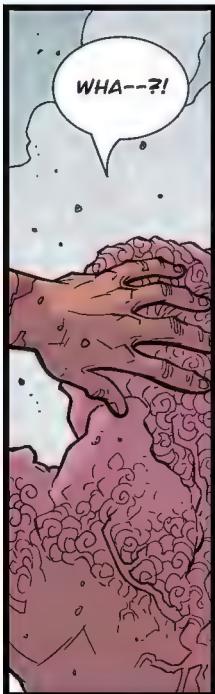
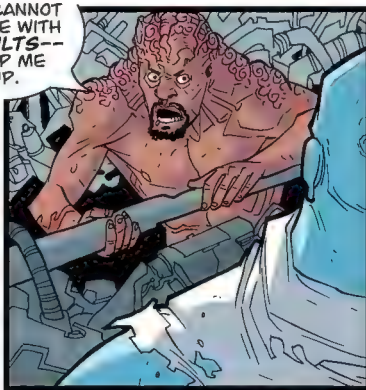




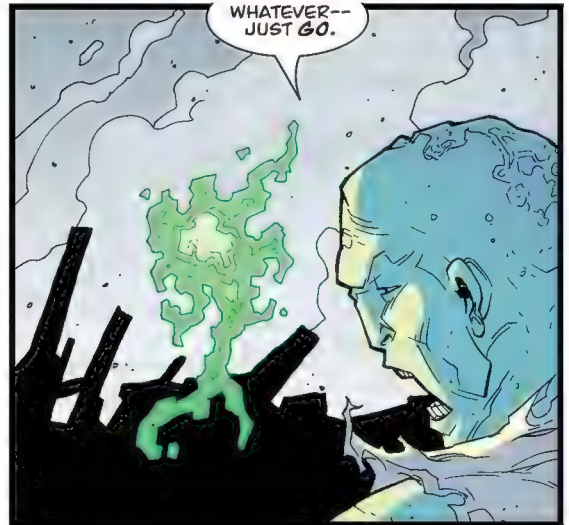
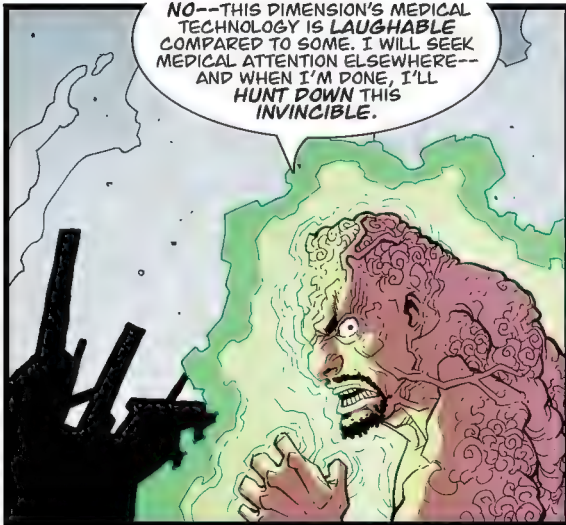














DON'T EVEN  
THINK ABOUT  
TAKING ME WITH  
YOU. IT'S NOT  
LIKE I NEED  
ANY MEDICAL  
ATTENTION OR  
ANYTHING.

DON'T  
WORRY  
ABOUT  
ME.

JERK.











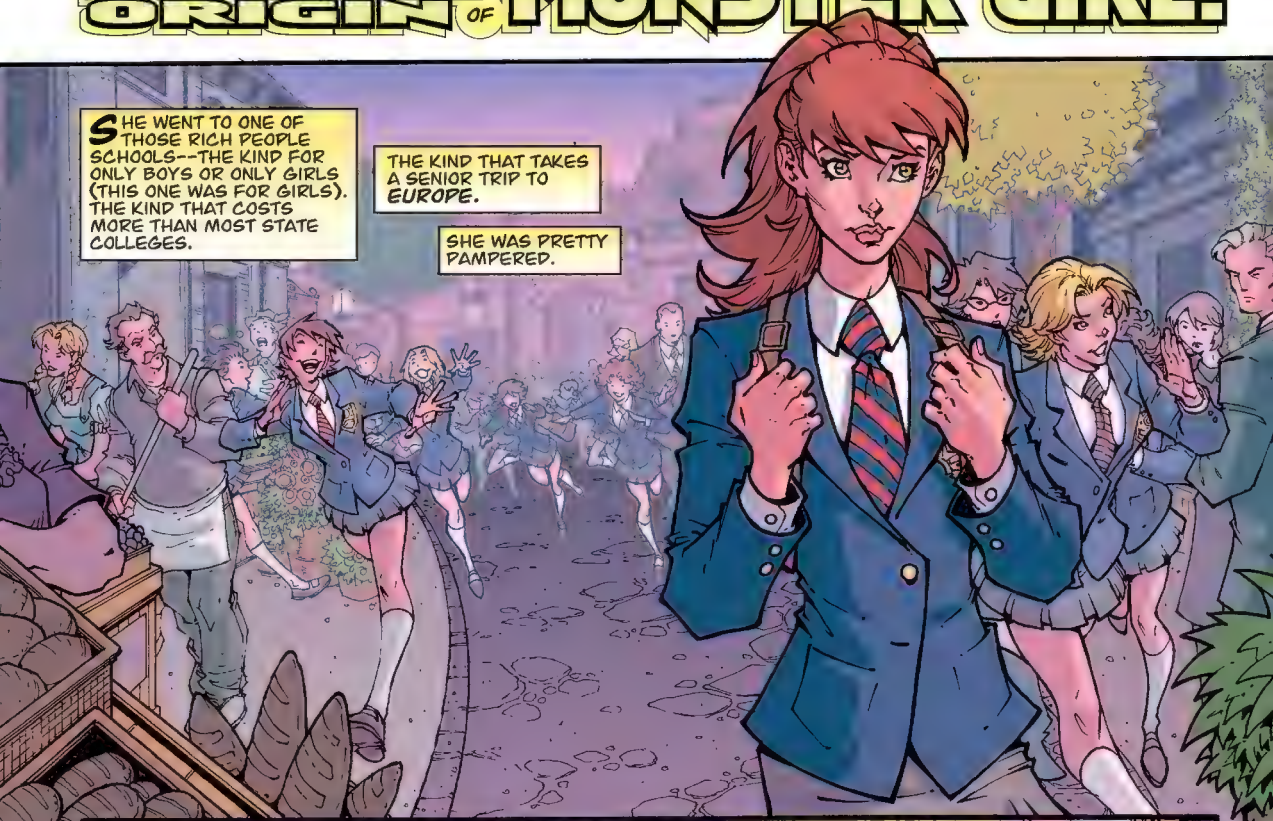


# AT LONG LAST--THE SECRET ORIGIN OF MONSTER GIRL!

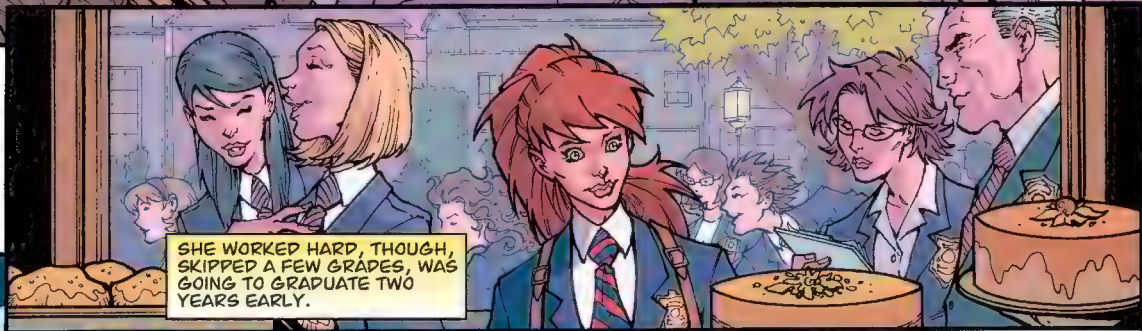
SHE WENT TO ONE OF THOSE RICH PEOPLE SCHOOLS--THE KIND FOR ONLY BOYS OR ONLY GIRLS (THIS ONE WAS FOR GIRLS). THE KIND THAT COSTS MORE THAN MOST STATE COLLEGES.

THE KIND THAT TAKES A SENIOR TRIP TO EUROPE.

SHE WAS PRETTY PAMPERED.

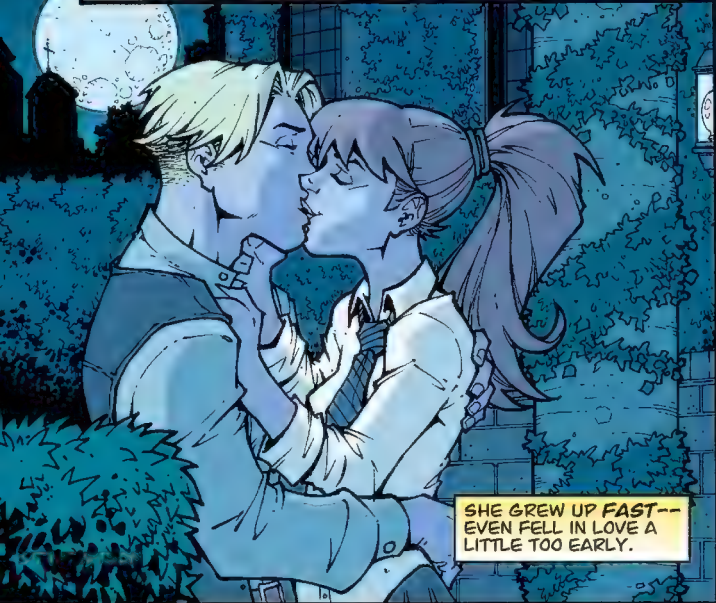


SHE WORKED HARD, THOUGH, SKIPPED A FEW GRADES, WAS GOING TO GRADUATE TWO YEARS EARLY.

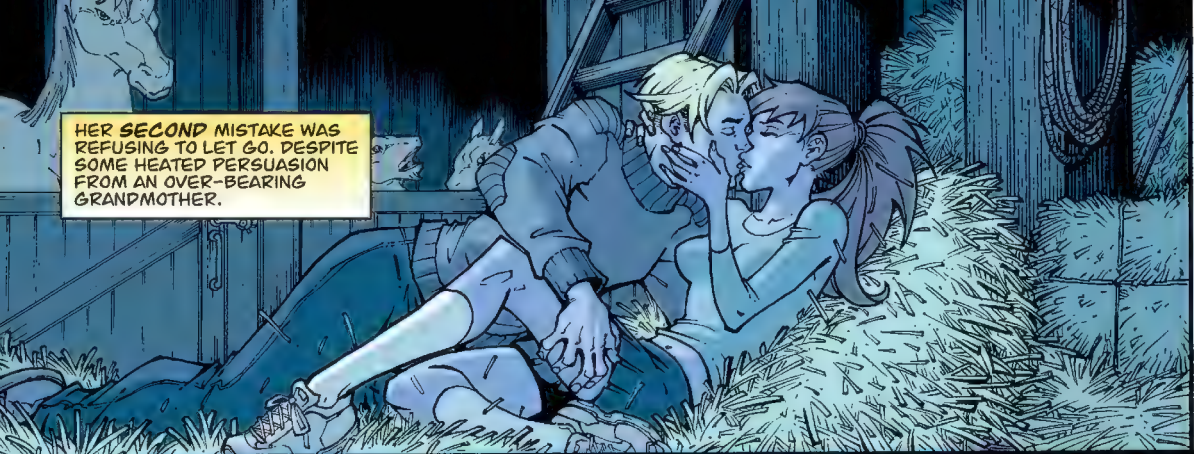


THAT WAS HER FIRST MISTAKE.

SHE GREW UP FAST--EVEN FELL IN LOVE A LITTLE TOO EARLY.



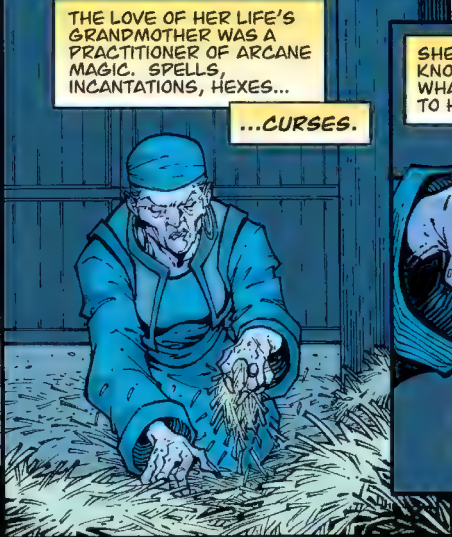




HER **SECOND** MISTAKE WAS REFUSING TO LET GO. DESPITE SOME HEATED PERSUASION FROM AN OVER-BEARING GRANDMOTHER.




HER **THIRD** MISTAKE WAS BEING SEEN.




THE LOVE OF HER LIFE'S GRANDMOTHER WAS A PRACTITIONER OF ARCAINE MAGIC. SPELLS, INCANTATIONS, HEXES...

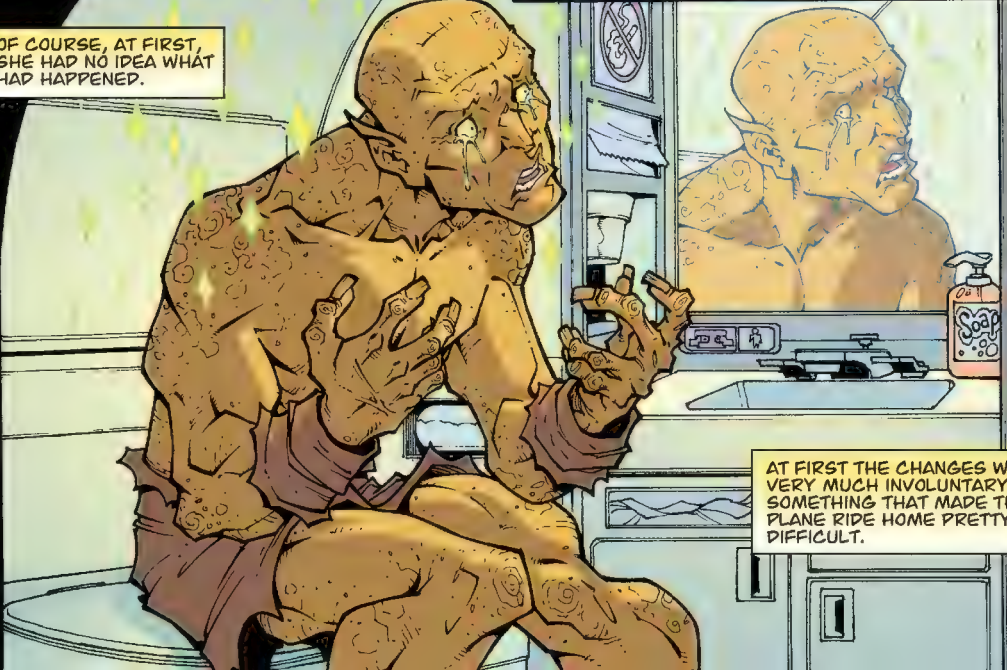
...CURSES.



SHE WOULD NEVER KNOW **EXACTLY** WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO HER.



IN TIME SHE WOULD START TO ASSUME SHE HAD CONTRACTED SOME SORT OF WEIRD EUROPEAN STD.



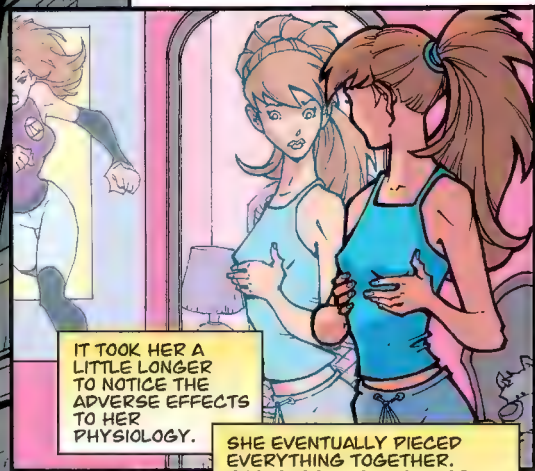
OF COURSE, AT FIRST, SHE HAD NO IDEA WHAT HAD HAPPENED.

AT FIRST THE CHANGES WERE VERY MUCH INVOLUNTARY. SOMETHING THAT MADE THE PLANE RIDE HOME PRETTY DIFFICULT.



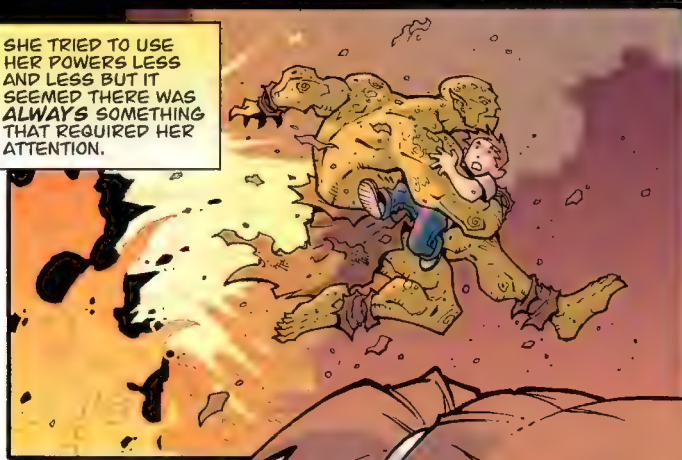


IT TOOK HER NO TIME AT ALL TO FIND A USE FOR HER NEW ABILITIES.

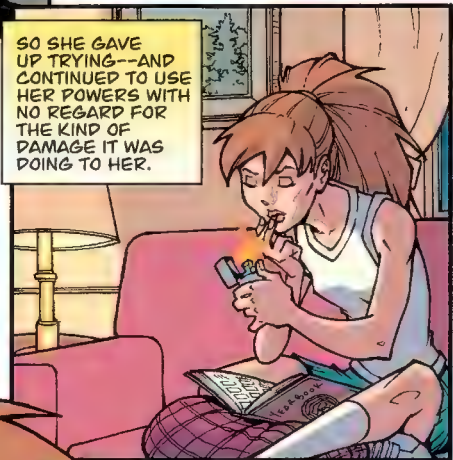


IT TOOK HER A LITTLE LONGER TO NOTICE THE ADVERSE EFFECTS TO HER PHYSIOLOGY.

SHE EVENTUALLY PIECED EVERYTHING TOGETHER. THE MORE SHE USED HER NEW POWERS THE YOUNGER SHE WOULD GET--AND THE LARGER AND MORE POWERFUL HER OTHER FORM WOULD BECOME.



SHE TRIED TO USE HER POWERS LESS AND LESS BUT IT SEEMED THERE WAS ALWAYS SOMETHING THAT REQUIRED HER ATTENTION.



SO SHE GAVE UP TRYING--AND CONTINUED TO USE HER POWERS WITH NO REGARD FOR THE KIND OF DAMAGE IT WAS DOING TO HER.

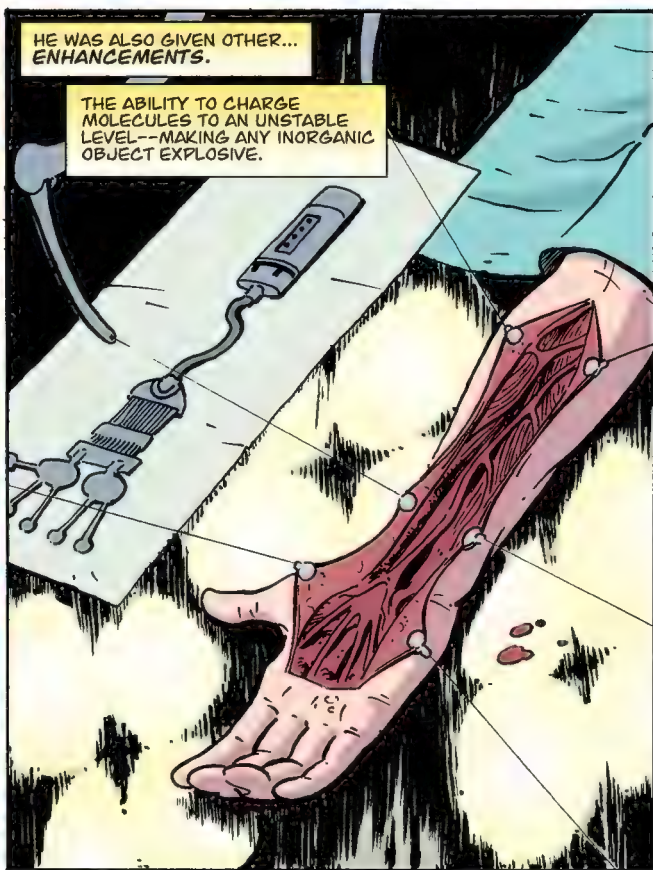
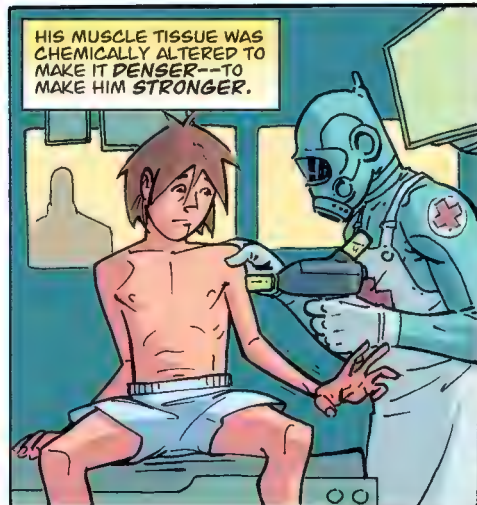
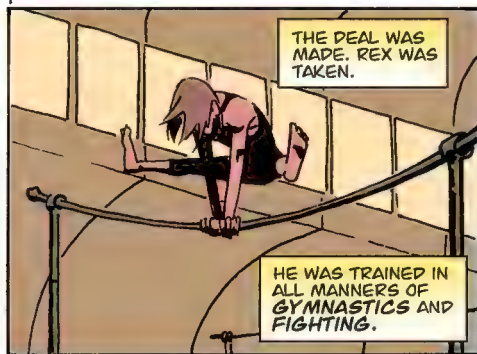
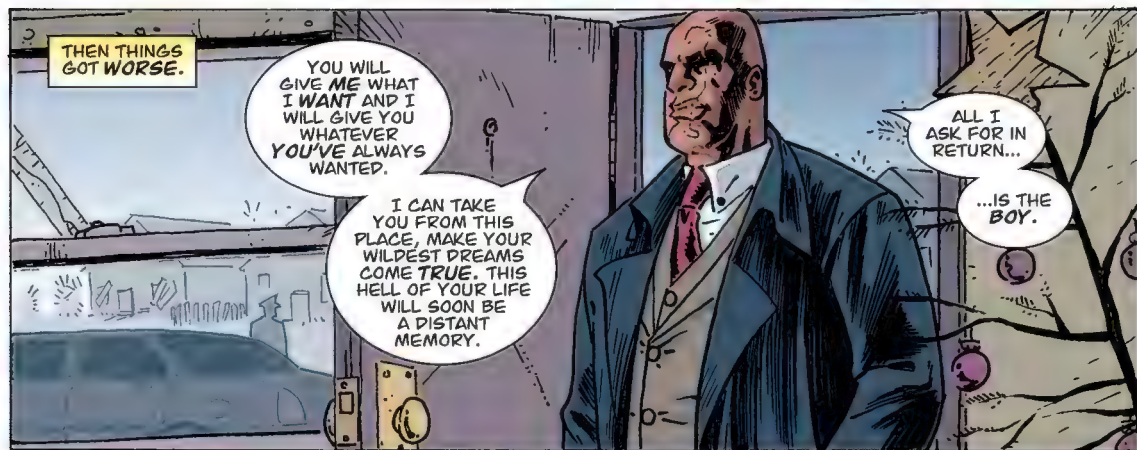
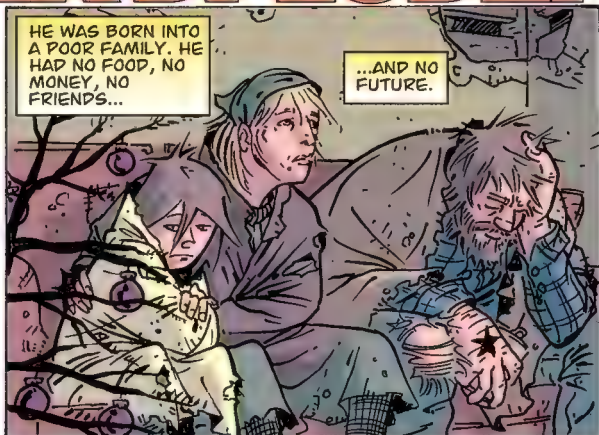


REMEMBER, SHE WAS A PAMPERED LITTLE RICH GIRL.

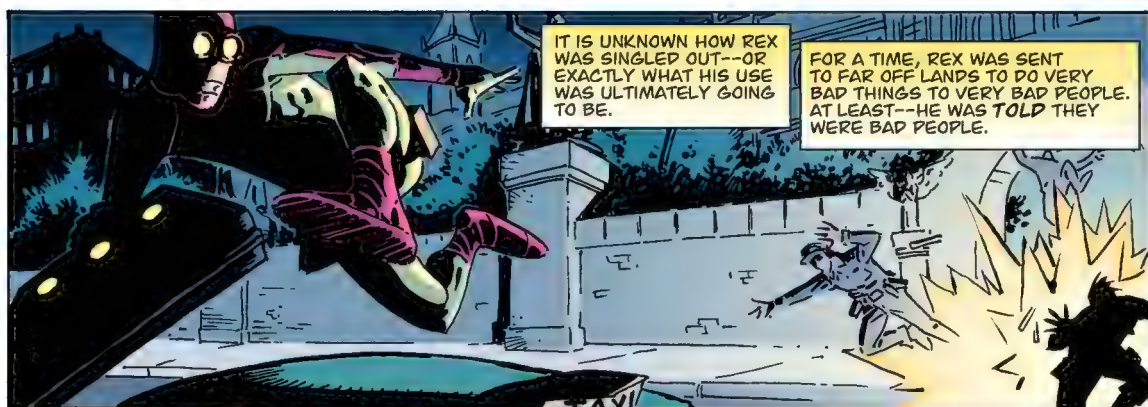
THEY DON'T USUALLY DEAL WITH THESE KINDS OF THINGS VERY WELL.



# AT LONG LAST THE SECRET ORIGIN OF REX SPLODE!







IT IS UNKNOWN HOW REX WAS SINGLED OUT--OR EXACTLY WHAT HIS USE WAS ULTIMATELY GOING TO BE.

FOR A TIME, REX WAS SENT TO FAR OFF LANDS TO DO VERY BAD THINGS TO VERY BAD PEOPLE. AT LEAST--HE WAS TOLD THEY WERE BAD PEOPLE.



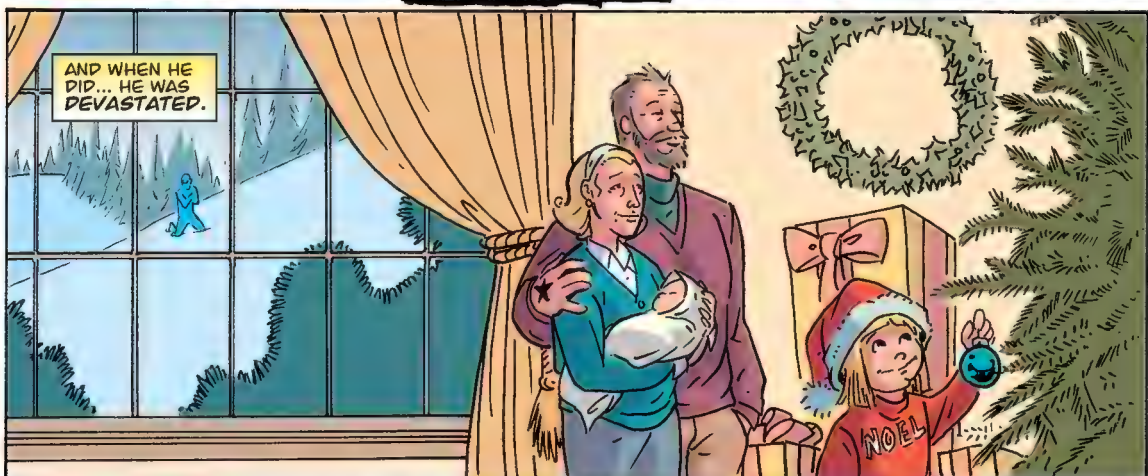
FOR A TIME HE WAS LOYAL. VERY LOYAL.



UNTIL HE ESCAPED.



HE WAS NEVER TOLD WHAT HAPPENED TO HIS PARENTS OR WHY HE WAS TAKEN FROM THEM. HE HAD TO FIND OUT.



AND WHEN HE DID... HE WAS DEVASTATED.

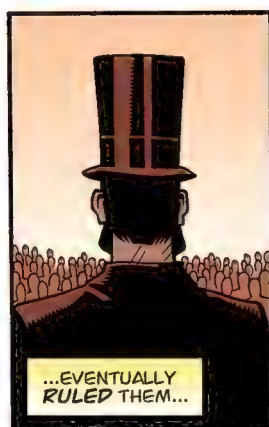
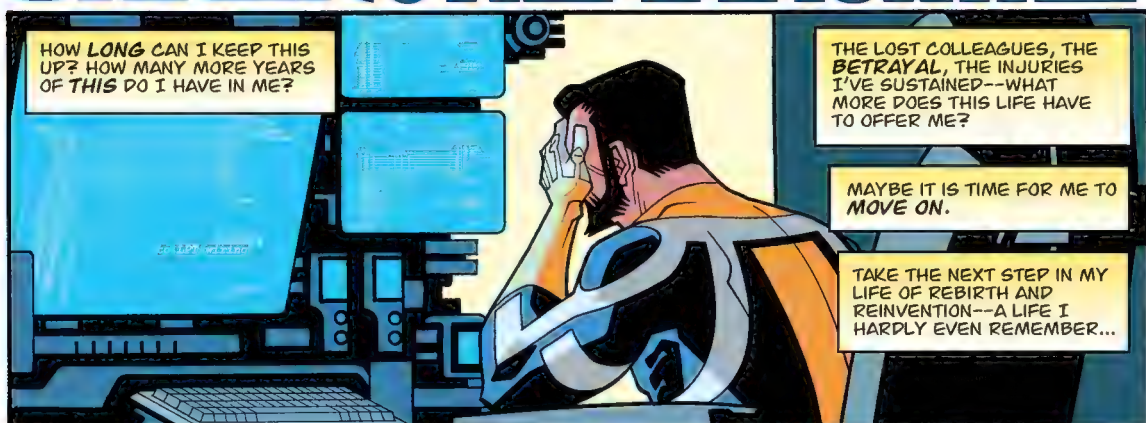


SO THE NEXT TIME REX IS ACTING LIKE A JERK--HAVE A LITTLE COMPASSION.

IT DOESN'T MAKE UP FOR EVERYTHING HE'S DONE... BUT MAYBE YOU'LL BE JUST A LITTLE BIT MORE UNDERSTANDING THE NEXT TIME HE GOES AND MAKES AN ASS OF HIMSELF.



# AT LONG LAST--THE SECRET ORIGIN OF THE IMMORTAL!





# AT LONG LAST--THE SECRET OF DUPLI-KATE!



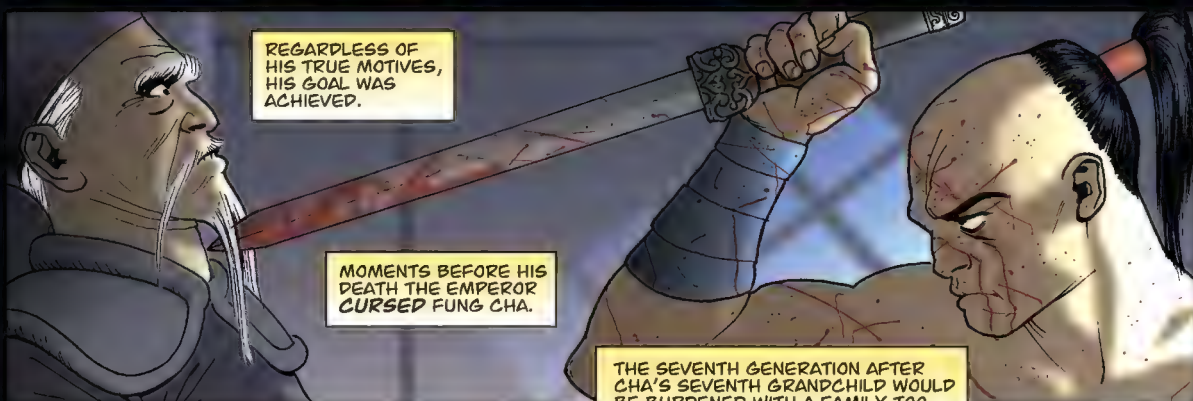
ANCIENT CHINA.

THE RUTHLESS WARLORD FUNG CHA WAS FIGHTING HIS WAY TO THE EMPEROR WITH ONE GOAL IN MIND--TAKING CONTROL OF THE CHINESE EMPIRE.

FUNG CHA WAS A SKILLED FIGHTER AND WAS MAKING HIS WAY THOUGH THE EMPEROR'S ELITE GUARD WITH LITTLE EFFORT.



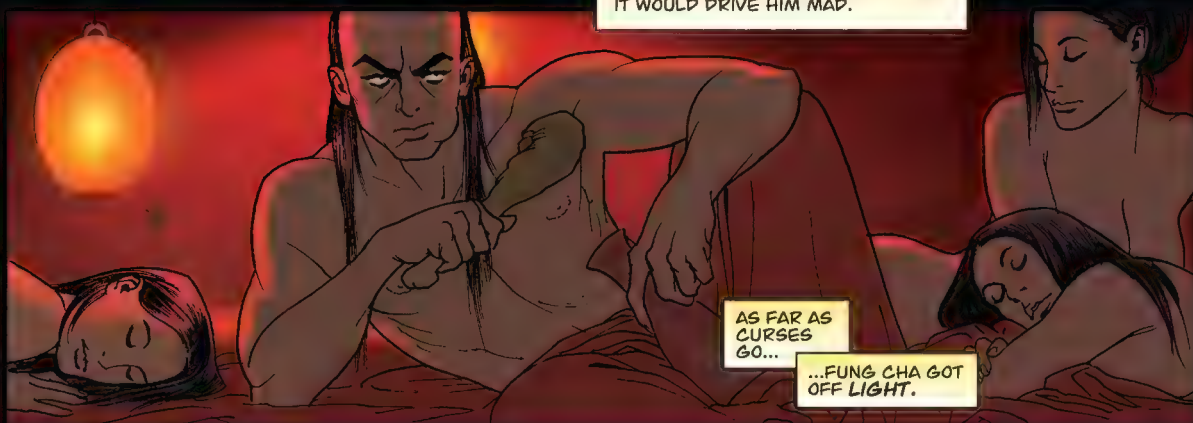
SOME WOULD SAY CHA WAS A FREEDOM FIGHTER, SAVING THE WORLD FROM THIS EVIL EMPEROR. OTHERS WOULD CLAIM CHA WAS LITTLE MORE THAN A POWER HUNGRY MADMAN.



REGARDLESS OF HIS TRUE MOTIVES, HIS GOAL WAS ACHIEVED.

MOMENTS BEFORE HIS DEATH THE EMPEROR CURSED FUNG CHA.

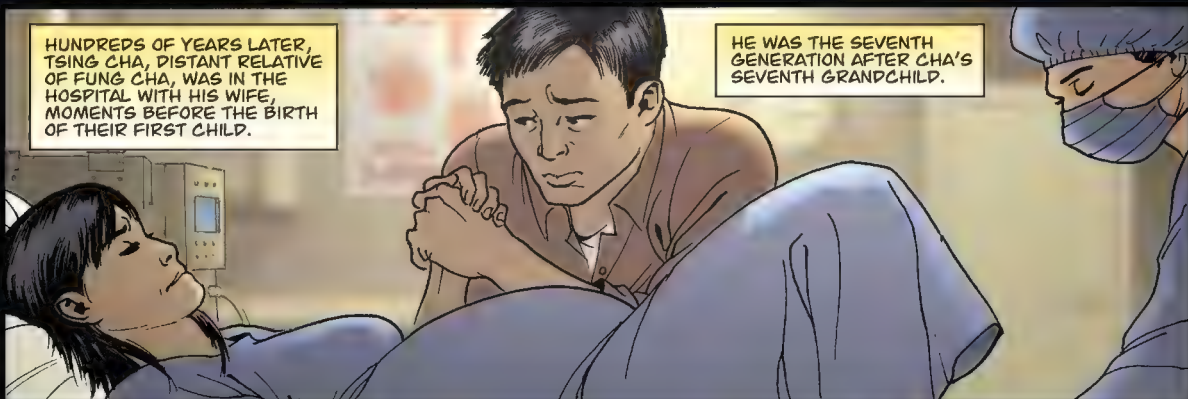
THE SEVENTH GENERATION AFTER CHA'S SEVENTH GRANDCHILD WOULD BE BURDENED WITH A FAMILY TOO LARGE FOR HIM TO CARE FOR... AND IT WOULD DRIVE HIM MAD.



AS FAR AS CURSES GO...

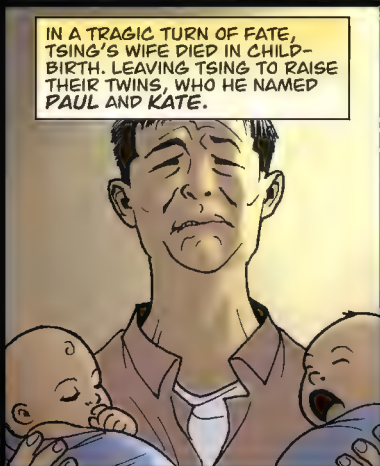
...FUNG CHA GOT OFF LIGHT.



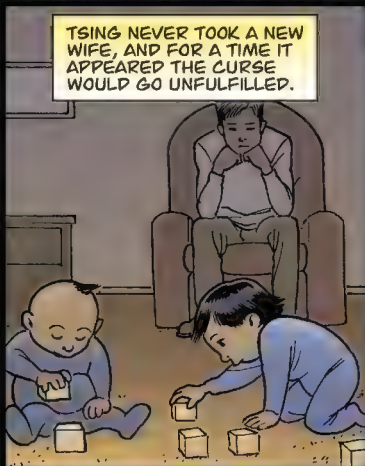


HUNDREDS OF YEARS LATER, TSING CHA, DISTANT RELATIVE OF FUNG CHA, WAS IN THE HOSPITAL WITH HIS WIFE, MOMENTS BEFORE THE BIRTH OF THEIR FIRST CHILD.

HE WAS THE SEVENTH GENERATION AFTER CHA'S SEVENTH GRANDCHILD.



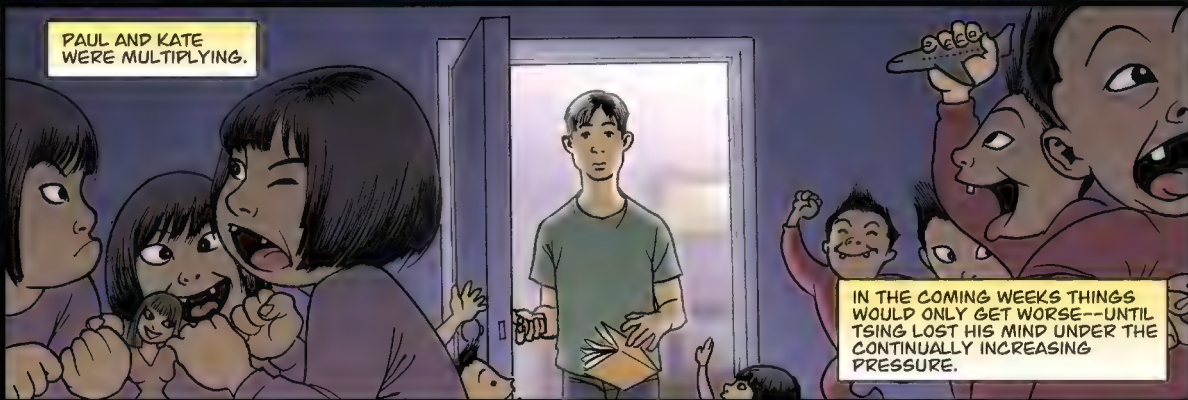
IN A TRAGIC TURN OF FATE, TSING'S WIFE DIED IN CHILD-BIRTH. LEAVING TSING TO RAISE THEIR TWINS, WHO HE NAMED PAUL AND KATE.



TSING NEVER TOOK A NEW WIFE, AND FOR A TIME IT APPEARED THE CURSE WOULD GO UNFULFILLED.

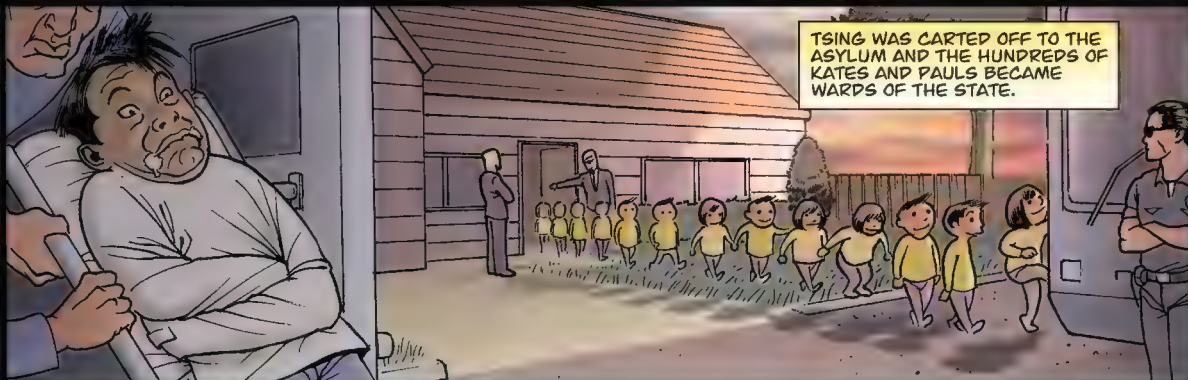


BUT THE EMPEROR'S RAGE WOULD NOT BE DENIED.



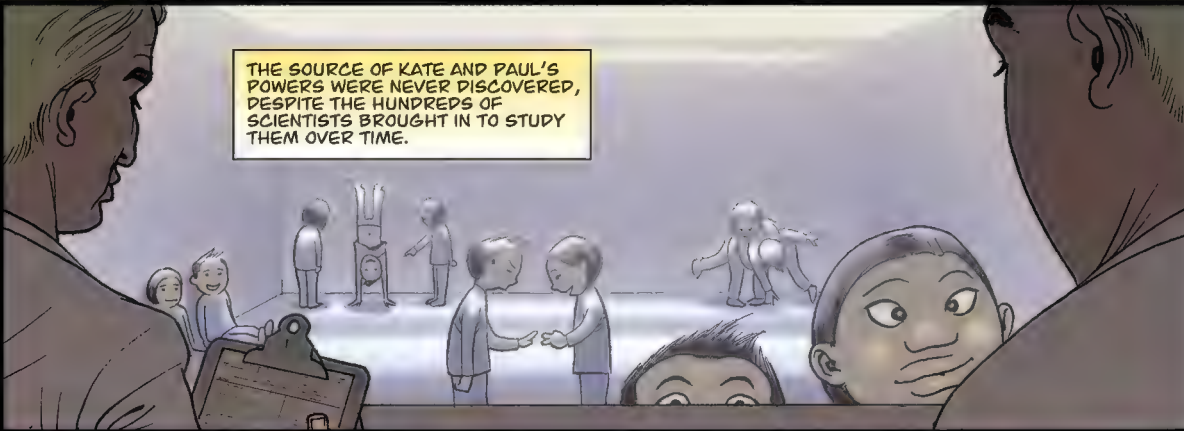
PAUL AND KATE WERE MULTIPLYING.

IN THE COMING WEEKS THINGS WOULD ONLY GET WORSE--UNTIL TSING LOST HIS MIND UNDER THE CONTINUALLY INCREASING PRESSURE.




TSING WAS CARTED OFF TO THE ASYLUM AND THE HUNDREDS OF KATES AND PAULS BECAME WARDS OF THE STATE.





THE SOURCE OF KATE AND PAUL'S POWERS WERE NEVER DISCOVERED, DESPITE THE HUNDREDS OF SCIENTISTS BROUGHT IN TO STUDY THEM OVER TIME.



WHEN THEY REACHED PUBERTY, BOTH KATE AND PAUL GAINED CONTROL OF THEIR POWERS, ABLE TO MULTIPLY AND ABSORB THEIR DUPLICATES AT WILL.

THEY BECAME A TEENAGE HEROIC DUO, RIGHTING WRONGS AND KEEPING THE WORLD SAFE.

DUPLI-KATE BECAME A MEMBER OF THE TEEN TEAM AND LATER AN INTEGRAL MEMBER OF THE SECOND VERSION OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE. WHERE SHE CONTINUES TO FIGHT CRIME TO THIS DAY.

THE CURRENT WHEREABOUTS AND STATUS OF MULTI-PAUL ARE UNKNOWN.



# AT LONG LAST--THE SECRET ORIGIN OF ATOM EVE!

THE STORY STARTED OUT ON A RATHER SAD NOTE-- BUT HEY, YOU HAVE TO START SOMEWHERE.

I--I'M SORRY, HONEY--I'M SO SORRY.

OH, ADAM!

ERICKSON, SIR--I'M SORRY--THERE WAS JUST NOTHING I COULD DO FOR HER. THE BABY DIED IN CHILDBIRTH-- IT WAS OUT OF MY HANDS.

YOU ARE OUT OF LINE, DOCTOR BRANDYWORTH-- THIS WAS OUR PROJECT--YOU SHOULD HAVE CONSULTED ME BEFORE YOU CHOSE A CIVILIAN HOSPITAL.

DOCTOR RODGERS, LISTEN TO ME--THERE WASN'T ENOUGH TIME TO GET THE TEST SUBJECT TO THE BASE--THE BABY WAS COMING.

AND NOW IT'S DEAD. THAT'S MILLIONS OF TAX DOLLARS DOWN THE DRAIN, BRANDYWORTH. IF YOU MAKE IT TO TOMORROW WITHOUT LOSING YOUR JOB OVER THIS, I'LL BE SURPRISED.

ADAM AND BETSY WILKINS? I HAVE YOUR BABY RIGHT HERE. IT WAS TOUCH AND GO FOR A WHILE BUT THE DOCTORS WERE ABLE TO SAVE HER.

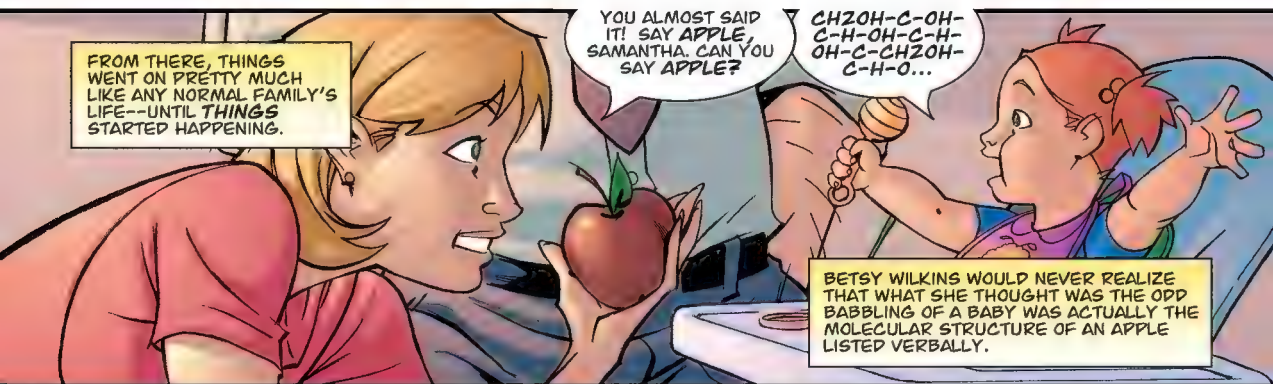
BUT-- BUT WE WERE TOLD--

ADAM, SHUSH! PLEASE--JUST ACCEPT THE MIRACLE.

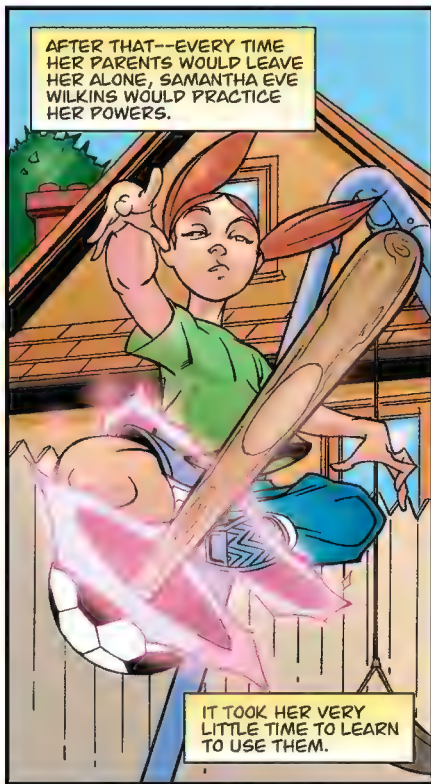
OUR BABY IS ALIVE...

OUR SAMANTHA EVE WILKINS.



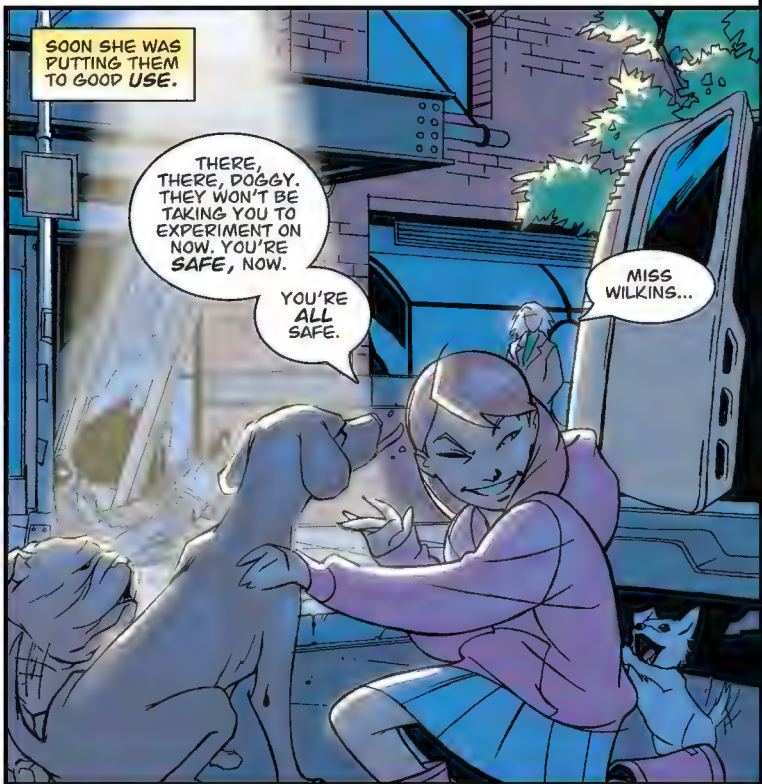






AFTER THAT--EVERY TIME HER PARENTS WOULD LEAVE HER ALONE, SAMANTHA EVE WILKINS WOULD PRACTICE HER POWERS.

IT TOOK HER VERY LITTLE TIME TO LEARN TO USE THEM.



SOON SHE WAS PUTTING THEM TO GOOD USE.

THERE, THERE, DOGGY. THEY WON'T BE TAKING YOU TO EXPERIMENT ON NOW. YOU'RE SAFE, NOW.

YOU'RE ALL SAFE.

MISS WILKINS...



WHO ARE YOU--HOW DID YOU KNOW MY NAME?!

I COULD BE CONSIDERED YOUR FATHER--IN A SENSE. I GAVE YOU YOUR POWERS--IT'S VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU LISTEN TO ME.



YOU WERE THE SUBJECT OF IN UTERO EXPERIMENTS--FUNDED BY THE GOVERNMENT. THEY WERE GOING TO TURN YOU INTO A WEAPON--BUT I COULDN'T ALLOW THAT.



WHAT YOU'RE DOING IS VERY DANGEROUS. I STAGED YOUR DEATH--REPLACED YOU WITH A BABY WHO HAD DIED DURING BIRTH--SO YOU COULD HAVE A LIFE WITH THE WILKINS FAMILY--BUT YOU HAVE TO STAY A SECRET!

IF THEY LEARN OF YOUR POWERS BEING USED--THEY'LL KNOW YOU LIVED--THEY WON'T STOP UNTIL THEY RECOVER YOU.



YOU MUST STOP THIS AT ONCE! STOP USING YOUR POWERS FOR ANYTHING--FOREVER--THEY MUST NOT DISCOVER YOU SURVIVED.

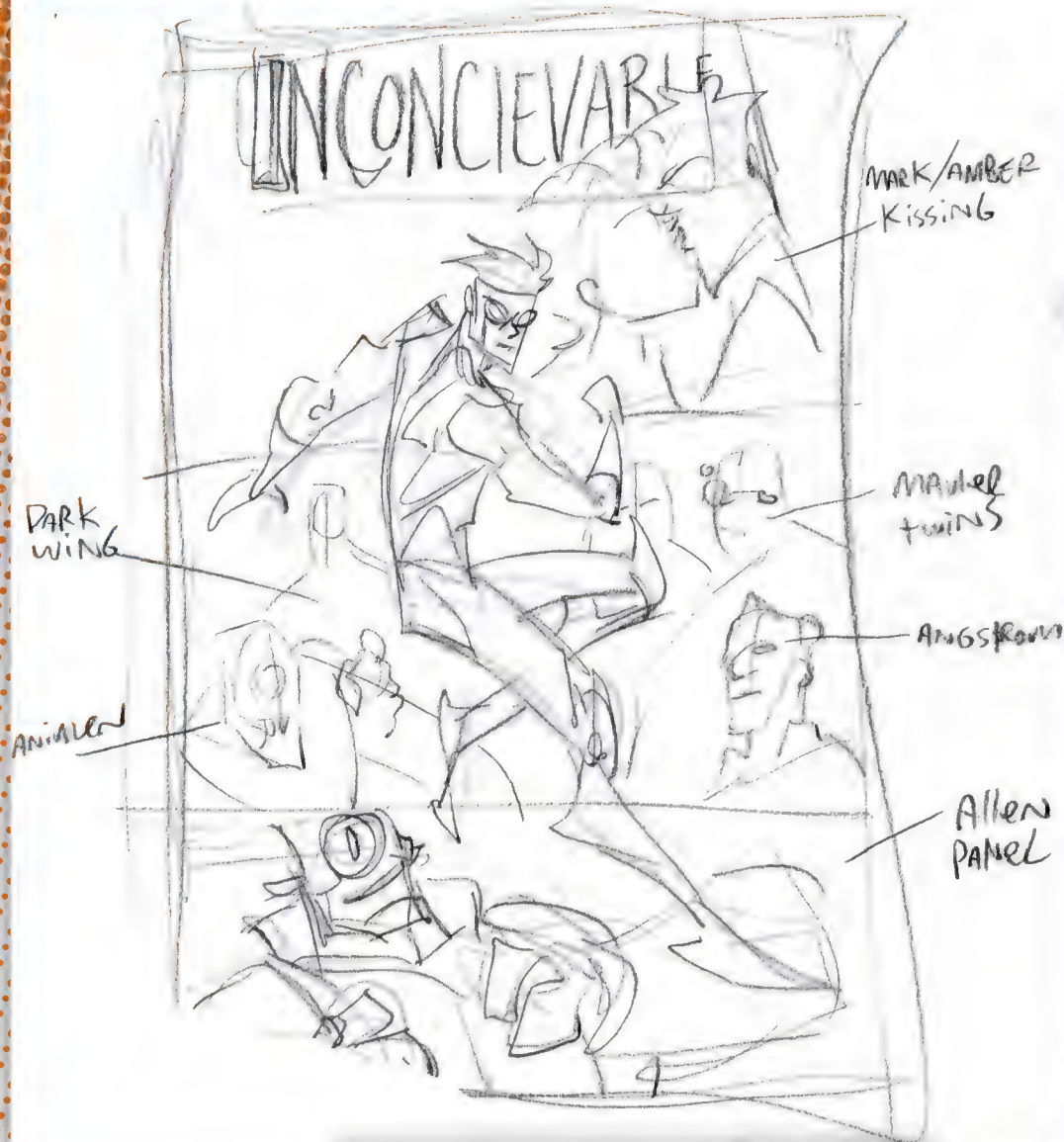
IF THEY FIND YOU--THEY WILL TAKE YOU--YOU'LL BE NOTHING MORE THAN A WEAPON--YOUR LIFE AS YOU KNOW IT--WILL END!

OBTAINING--SHE FOUND A WAY TO AVOID ALL THIS, BUT THAT'S A STORY FOR ANOTHER TIME.









On this page you will see Ryan's original sketch for the cover of this volume. The trade-dress for these collections has become a cool pose of Mark with panels behind him, depicting things that happened in this volume. So here's another one. Bill Crabtree absolutely hates this idea. It bugs him to no end to have to come up with a different color scheme for what is essentially the same cover every time. In an effort to accommodate Bill without abandoning this theme (which I LIKE) we're trying something a little different with Volume 6. Which you guys will see when that volume is released.

On the following page, you'll see Ryan's attempt to get ahead of the game on Invincible poses for these trade paperbacks. We'll probably eventually use one or two of these. Probably the one in the center with the guns.







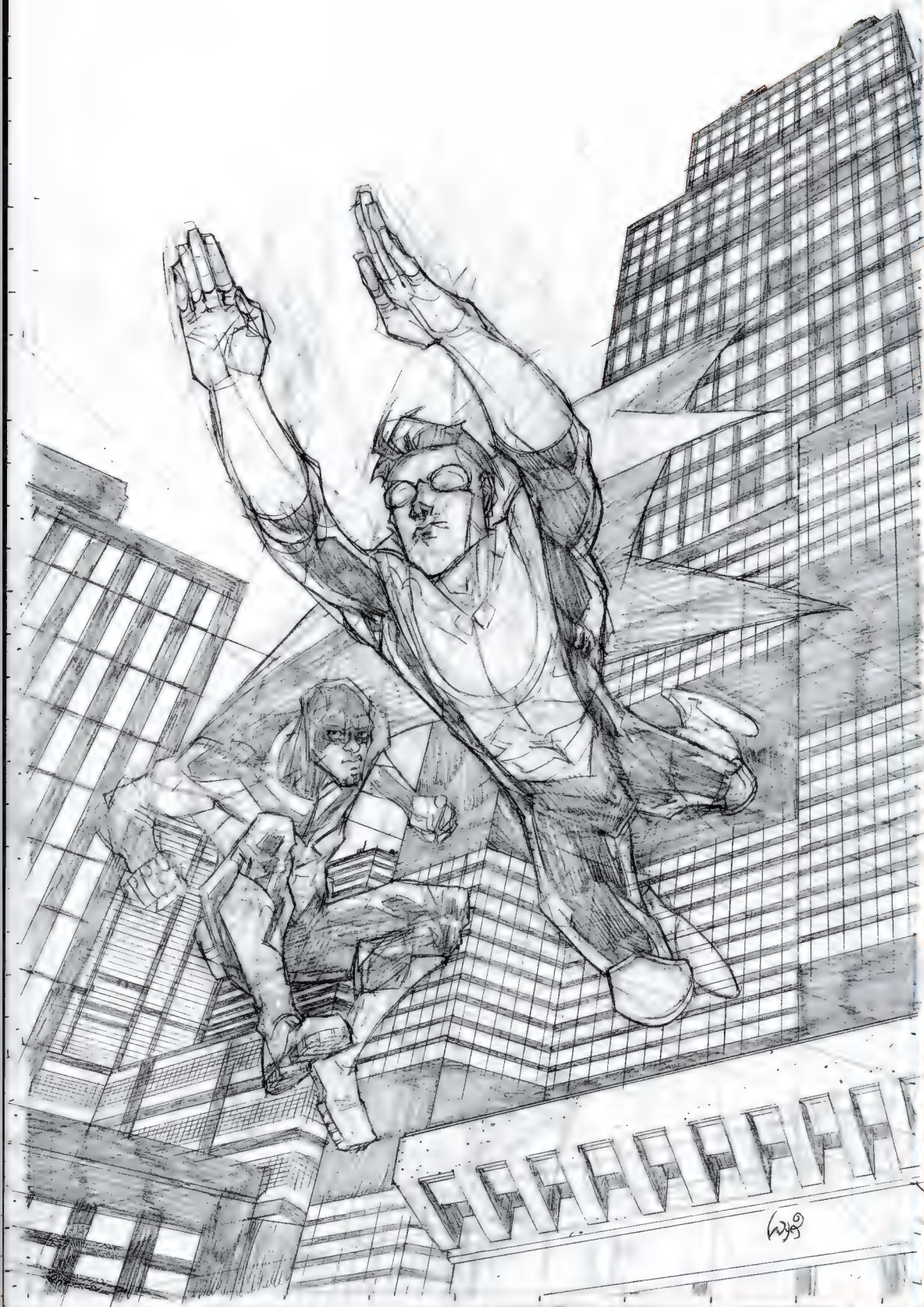




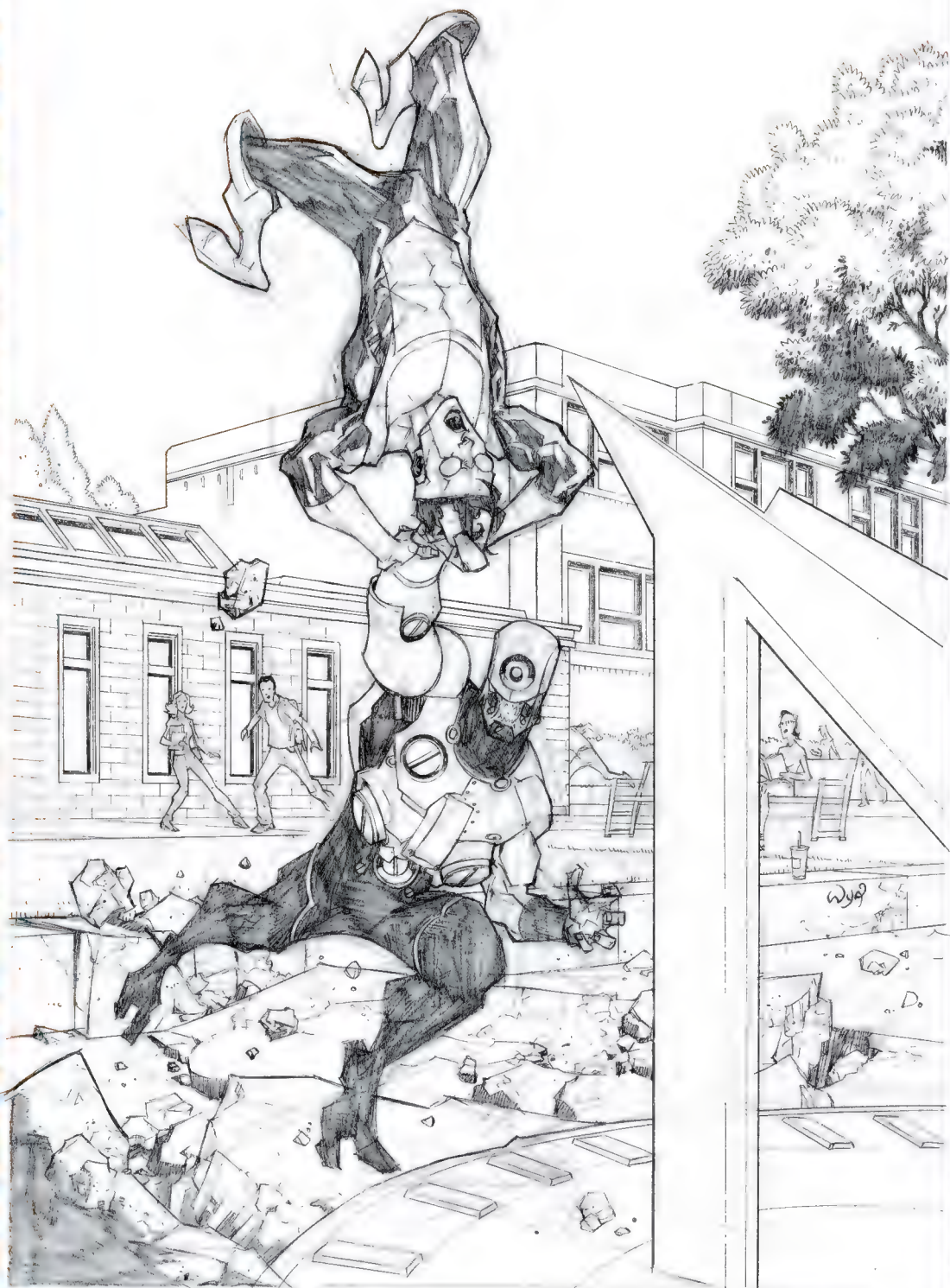
Ryan's layouts for the cover to issue 21. I'll never forgive myself for not telling him to use the one with Darkwing surfing on Invincible's back.

On the following page, we see Ryan's pencils for the cover to 21.







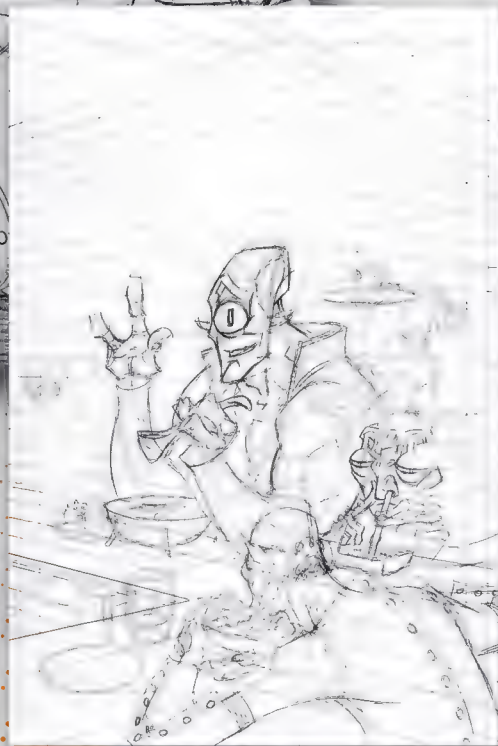
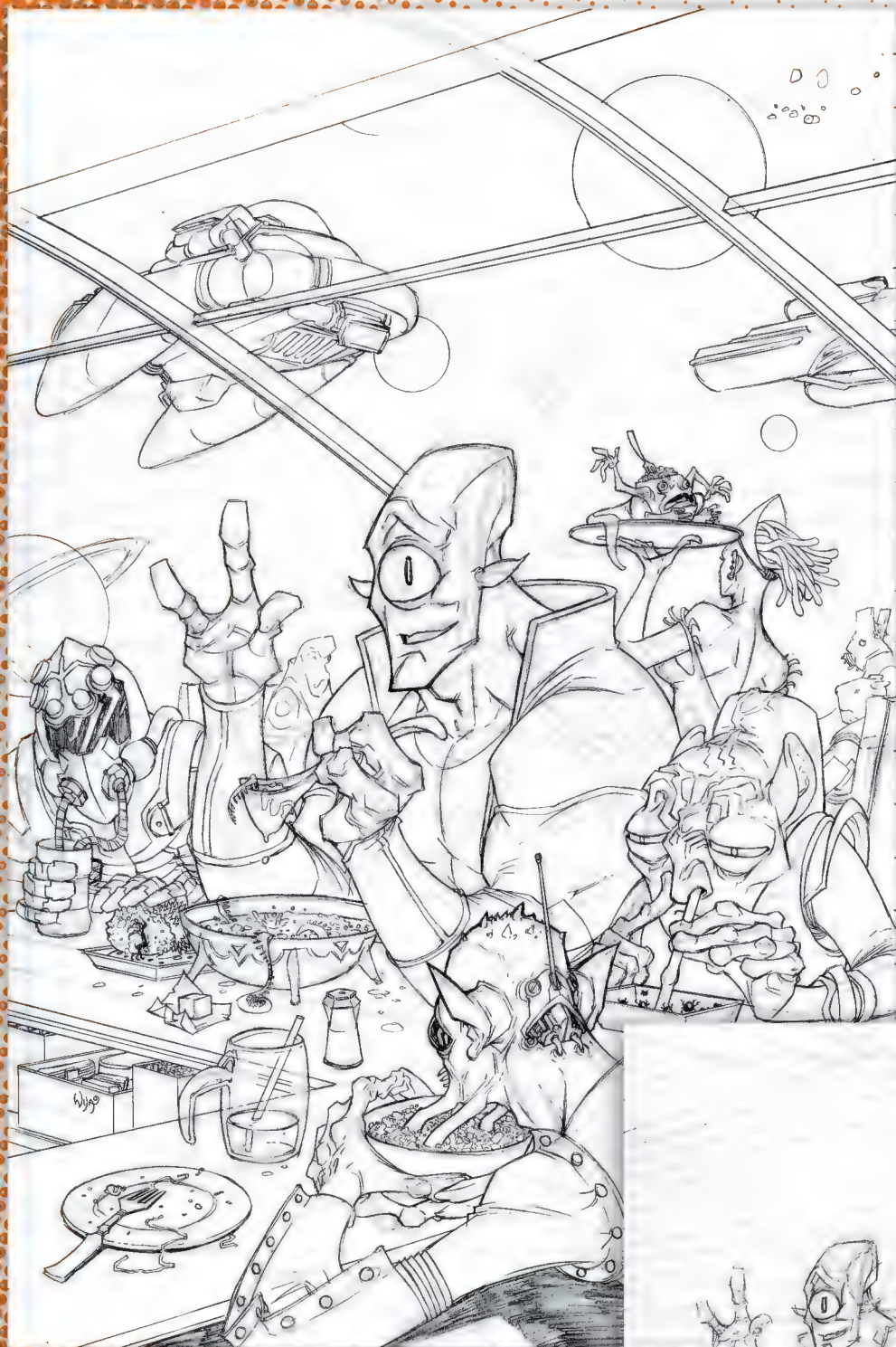


Here we have the original pencils for the cover to issue 20. I just wasn't feeling this one. The placement of the Reaniman's legs were off and the whole piece just didn't flow the way it should have. I think the final version we used looked much better.









Ryan's rough sketch and pencils for the cover to 23. The all Allen issue. I hope you cats liked that one. I tried something a little different for it and to be honest, some people out there just didn't dig it. Screw those guys, though. This was probably the most fun comic I've ever written. I had a blast with this one.





The pencils to the big 0 issue. I had a lot of fun with this issue too. Recaping things while strengthening Mark and Amber's relationship. Up until this issue, most people didn't like Amber--now, some people do.





Here's a sketch for the cover to issue 24 along with a redesign for the new Darkwing. I was reluctant to bring back any of the original Guardians of the Globe members because, lets face it, they were pretty derivative of other, slightly more well know characters. But the story in issue 21 is actually part of a larger subplot that will be taking center stage in future issues and so I couldn't resist. And... I like the name Darkwing. So there.



DARKWING  
II





More Allen. You all love Allen as much as I do right? I hope so. When Allen got beat all to crap in issue 23 I sent the splash page of him all ripped up out to some friends who hadn't read the issue yet, knowing they'd think I had killed him. Cory Walker especially was MIGHTY pissed. I had quite a time reading all their responses. Allen is here to stay, folks. He's one of my favorites.







Just some drawings Ryan did for fun.  
Nothing to read here, move along.





Another drawing Ryan did for fun, along with some layouts for issues 21 and 24.





Just some random fun. Mark as a zombie, Invincible fighting some random other superhero whom I do not recognize whatsoever. And the sketches for the cover to Scott Kurtz's Invincible crossover in PVP issue 14. Scott's a pal of mine, and an Invincible fan... so of course, it only seemed to be a matter of time before the characters met, and I sure as hell wasn't going to do it in THIS book... heh.



NOT REALLY DIPPING  
 BUT DIRTY DANKING BABY!!!

MORE OF A  
 CLOSE-UP OF  
 JADE BEING  
 DIPPED (THINK CLEAN ROBERT.)





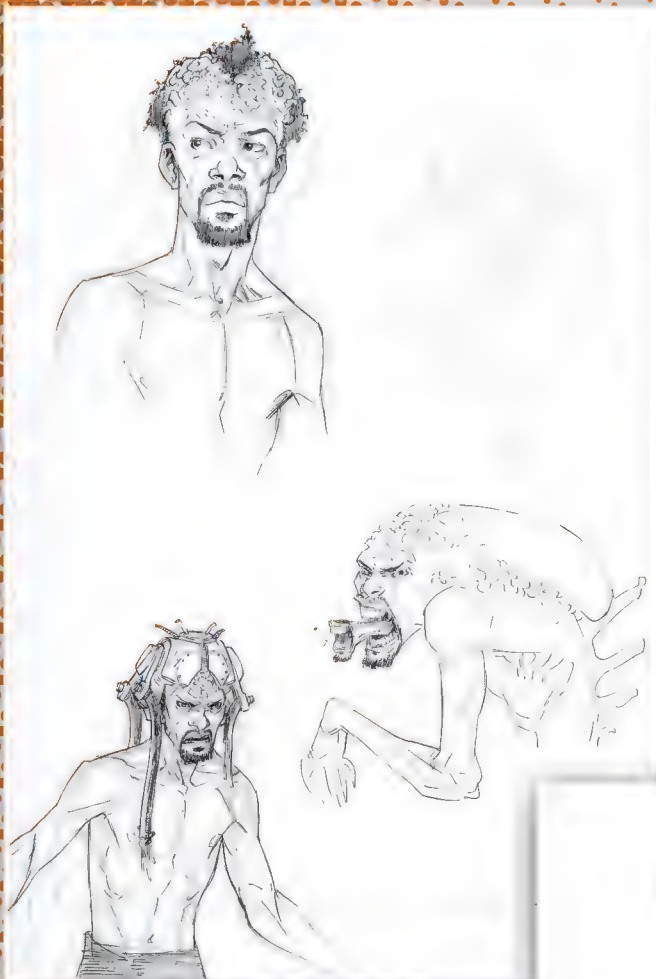


MARK GRAYSON  
AGE 30

Cory Walker and I talk on the phone a lot. Sometimes we'll chat about Invincible and then he'll do fun little sketches as a result. One day we were talking about how funny Mark would look with a mustache when he got older. Him being Viltrumite and all, he'd HAVE to have one... and how it'd be cool if he had a new costume then, that was more like Nolan's. The next day I got these sketches.







The plan for Angstrom Levy was for him to be turned into a deformed freak. I wanted to give him some sort of brain related deformity, since he was absorbing the minds of all his doubles. This being comics, though--just about every brain-related kind of deformity you can imagine has been done. So my idea was to have Angstrom's brains expand down into his shoulders and back. I figured that would look cool. Ryan's first attempt was too standard, and he didn't quite get my "shoulders and back" suggestion--which is why I got the "Look how dumb you are, Robert" Alien-style Angstrom sketch. Since Ryan wasn't quite getting what I wanted, I brought in Cory to see what he could do. Cory seemed to get what I wanted, his designs were mighty cool, actually. Using those as a basis, Ryan was able to wrap his head around what I wanted and the final design for deformed Angstrom was born. We'll be seeing more of this guy VERY soon.

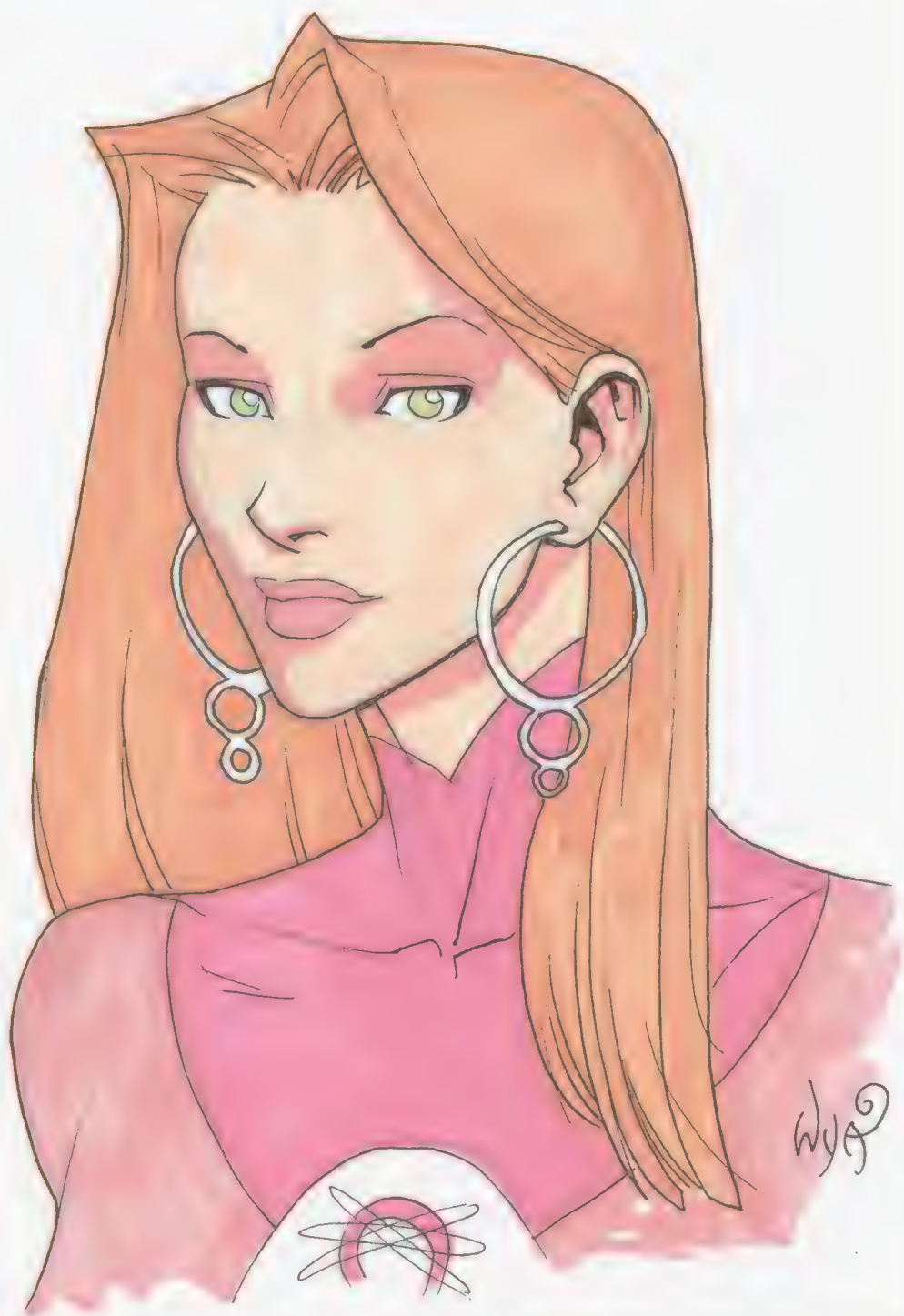






Over the next bit of pages in this sketchbook we'll be sharing with you some of Ryan's marker drawings he's been doing at conventions for people. If you ever see Ryan at a con, ask for one of these puppies. They're worth whatever he's charging... unless he's charging too much.



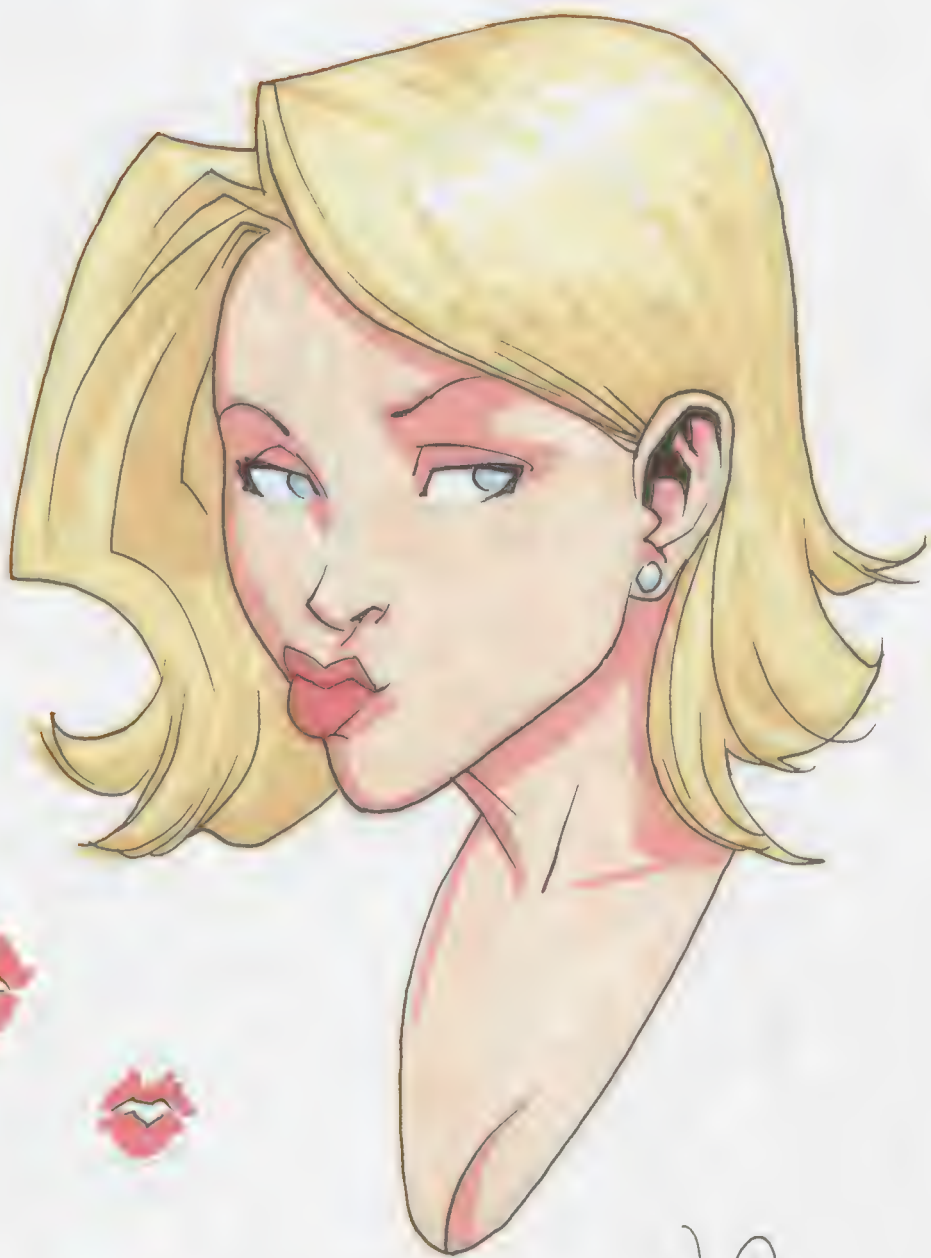






Wyer





Wyo







WYF









That's all they drew, kids. I hope you enjoyed this sketchbook section as much as I did.

-Robert Kirkman





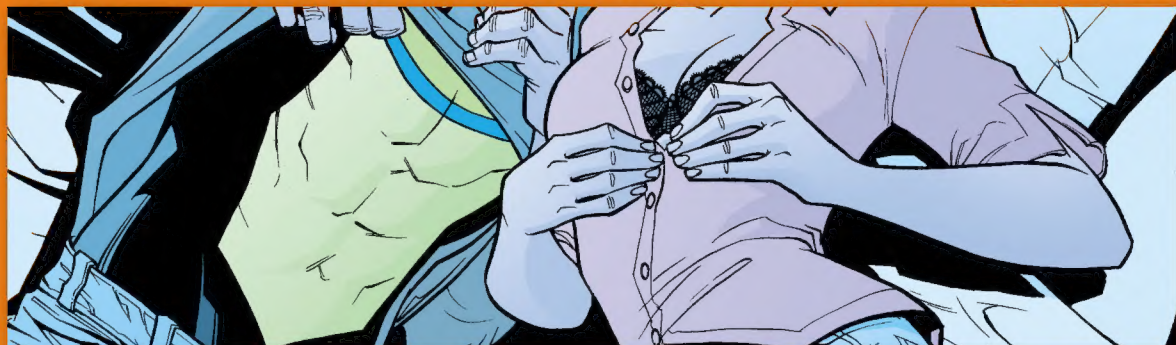


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Things are starting to get complicated.



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